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easy layers, yourself.





GPHG

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WOMAN WE LOVE

You might not have heard about it but Margo Midwinter had a pretty good year. From riding elephants, cliff diving, to competing in the country's biggest reality show, the british-Filipino model made 2015 that much better.





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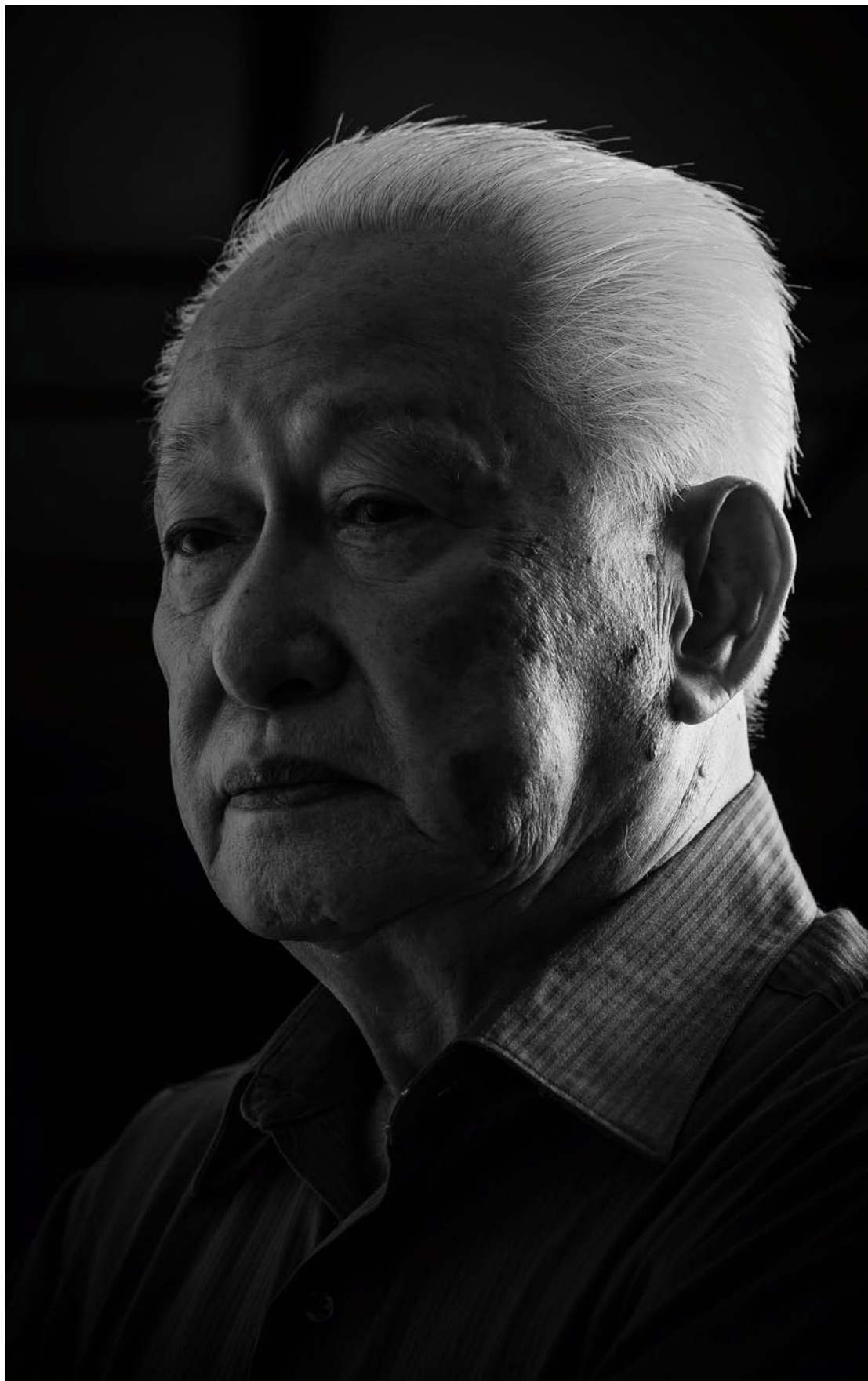
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Patricia Evangelista remembers the nightmarish first days right after typhoon Yolanda. Yes, it really happened.

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THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER

Alredo Lim used to be the man of Manila until he lost it to an ousted former president. Erwin Romulo talks to the legendary cop who is fighting to take back his city.





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What I've Learned

INTERVIEWED BY JONTY CRUZ
NOVEMBER 23, 2015



The editor-in-chief would like to dedicate this issue to Simon, Cheskie, Cara, Zach, Maia, Vito, Nico, Luna, and Demi. Remember, lot of times when you're young you think you can take on the world. Funny thing is, more often than not, you're right.

I'VE BEEN IN PUBLISHING FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS. I got in The Philippine Star in 1996. I was 20, if I'm not mistaken. I think they hired me because of my name, but good thing I had talent. Not everyone did (*laughs*).

I WAS ALWAYS RESTLESS and I never wanted to put myself in a box. I tried all kinds of journalism. When I read Nick Joaquin's dictum that [goes], "There are no *bakya* topics, only *bakya* writers," I took that to heart.

THE GREATEST LESSON I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER, was that if you're born with a name, you have to make something out of it. My dad did that. He was living under the name of Carlos P. Romulo. But he fought hard to add value to that name rather than just rely on it. Unlike a lot of people I know and I grew up with, who just did everything on borrowed will. It's such a waste. If you have this name to go by and it opens doors, better make sure that you can stay in long after the name is gone, long after the door has been closed. It doesn't stay open forever.

ALEXIS TIOSECO TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE GRATEFUL. He had such a pure love for cinema and he asked for nothing in return. But he demanded a lot from everyone. He demanded a lot because he gave a lot, but he was always grateful for whatever he got. He always said there was much to repay. All the time, he kept on saying that and he put it in an essay that we did together. He taught me to be grateful, that we can experience these things, that we can look at these things, that we can enjoy them, and [that] we're living in a time we're living in now.

I WAS A VICTIM OF NOSTALGIA. I always thought that it was a better time. Ever since I was young, I read a lot of the classics and everything. Then Alexis made me grateful to be alive in the present. His death taught me a lot of things. That you can't choose your end so you better make the most of whatever you've got until it's gone.

I WORKED IN THE FREE PRESS. I joined it on its 100th year. But at the time I joined the Free Press, it was really on its last legs. So there was not much to do but read the archives. So I read almost every issue the Free Press had in its archives. Oh my god, what a history lesson. And writing lesson. It's the same

headlines, even same names, recurring all throughout Philippine history and Philippine politics.

MY DEFINITION OF SUCCESS, for Esquire in particular, isn't everyone's great success. Everyone would point to the usual like the Eraserheads issue, which I thought was a success, but I thought it was more successful to put Erwin Castillo on the cover the next month, because I thought, this was something no one else would do. And we did it brilliantly. And we didn't sacrifice our principles or what we thought our readers should read. So that was a great success to me.

IF YOU PUT A CELEBRITY ON THE COVER BUT YOU SAY NOTHING, THAT'S THE BIGGEST FAILURE OF THEM ALL. 'Cause if you have a chance to work with a celebrity, you can't just rely on them, you have to say something more profound or something other than just mere "look at me, I'm a celebrity," if you can get people or even the celebrity to engage more, then that's better. There always has to be a turn of the screw.

I LIKE SUBVERSION. Irony is my best friend. Although a lot of people have told me Filipinos don't get irony, they only get slapstick. But still why would I have to dumb myself down? Or [condescend] my readers if I know that a significant number of them get it? Criticism is better than no reaction at all. We're meant to provoke.

THIS INDUSTRY AND ALMOST EVERY OTHER INDUSTRY IS BUILT ON COMPROMISE. You can compromise a little bit or a lot but the thing is, if you compromise too much and it still fails, that's a double failure. And that's what you want to kill yourself for. But if you risk something and it still failed in the eyes of many people, but you knew what you did was right and good, then I'm perfectly okay with that. My fear is not living up to the standard that I set for myself, which is always pushing [boundaries].

I HATE BAD WRITING. I've been at this for a long time and I've put so much into it and then somebody just gives you a piece of shit. You say, "What's wrong? Do I look like a toilet to you?" Sometimes the language just doesn't sit well. Sometimes it's so obscene to me for you to submit substandard work. Somebody once said, "Writing is easy. You just stare at the page un-

til your forehead bleeds." So if you do anything less than that, it's not good for me.

SOME PEOPLE THINK I'M TOO INTENSE. WHY SHOULDN'T I BE? We're doing magazines, we're doing publishing. We're so lucky. We're doing things we love. Why shouldn't you be intense about it? And who said being intense can't be fun?

I CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND WOMEN. I [don't even know] how to start with them. Every one of them is really a mystery to me, to be honest. That's why I'm so fascinated by women. That's why I want to hear them talk and just let them talk. I can't [follow] how they think. I really don't.

MEN ARE BORING. MEN ARE THE SAME THE WORLD OVER. They're driven by the same things. Women seem to have a unique sense of needs. I wouldn't be an expert at women at all. I wouldn't know what to tell them, that's why I only listen.

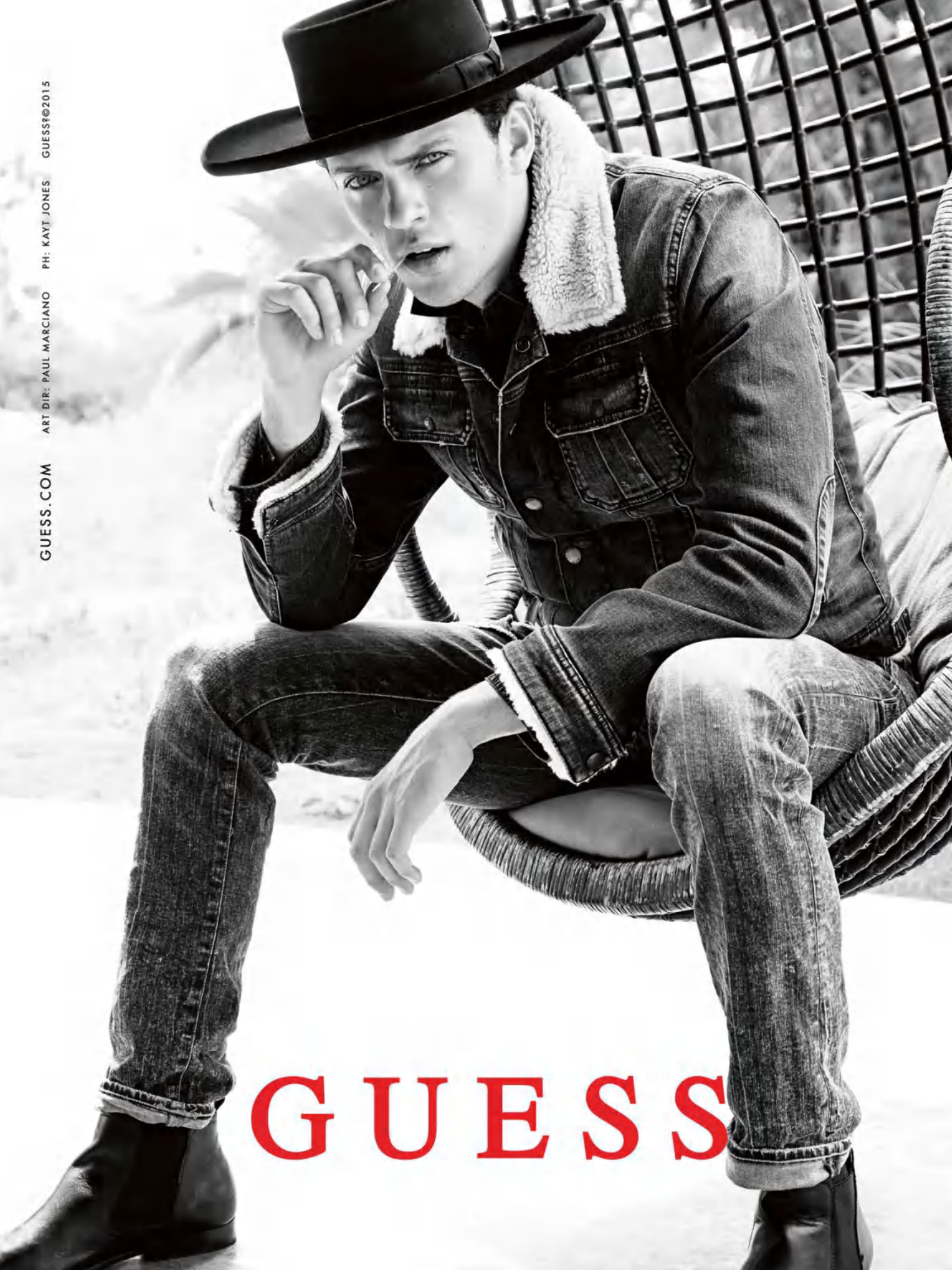
I DON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOVE AND SEX. I've fallen in love with a lot of inanimate objects or concepts and ideas. But people, not many times.

I REALIZED I LIKED THE STRUCTURE OF RELIGION. I liked the rituals. I liked doing the things that were required of me to show my devotion. I liked the discipline of it. That's why I wouldn't subscribe it to anyone else because it's a peculiar kind of faith. I really like going to church, I like hearing the songs, I like going to confession, I like the ceremony of it. But whether or not I believed in all of this or God is something else.

WHO DO I PRAY TO? SAINT JUDE, THE PATRON SAINT OF LOST CAUSES. Early on, in the '90s, it was just so appealing, the title. I'm going to go for the guy who really caters to people who are hopeless and who have hopeless causes.

I BELIEVE IN ENTROPY MORE THAN HOPE. It's more interesting to me.

No, I'M NOT GOOD AT GOODBYES. That's why I never say it. I just disappear.



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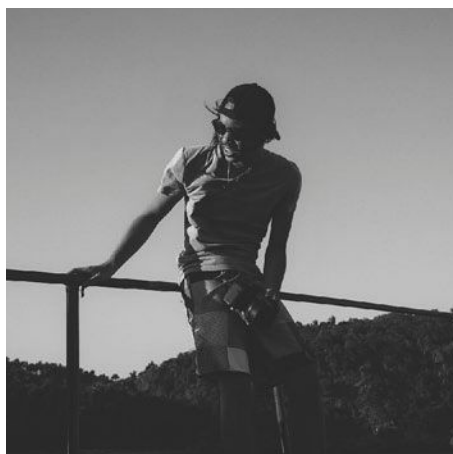
THIS MONTH'S
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ISABEL SANTOS is a visual artist based in Manila. She recently exhibited her first solo show, *Step 1, Step 2*, at West Gallery.



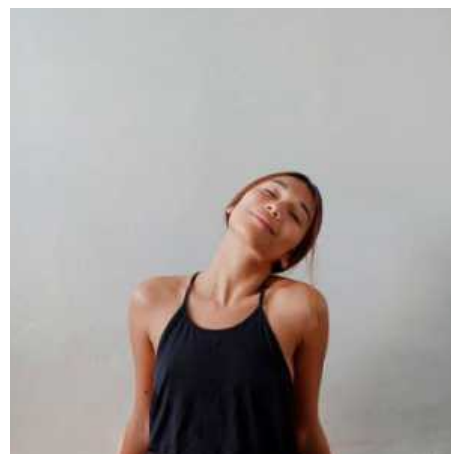
KITKAT PAJARO is a 19-year-old student at the Ateneo de Manila University. Outside of school, she finds time to do freelance photography and is a junior photographer at Shutter Panda Photography. She sees the world “as an array of stories waiting to be seen and told.”



ARTU NEPOMUCENO first attempted to become a chef, before realizing that he had no stomach for butchery. He graduated with a major in photography from the College of St. Benilde. Today, his works are published in *Garage*, *Scout*, *Northern Living*, and *Southern Living*. With the help of his mom, he put up a small ice cream sandwich shop called Louie-Luis, whose profits go back to his first love, photography.



KRISTINE CAGUIAT is a collage artist and illustrator. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, Information Design from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2010 and received certifications in illustration and art theory from the Slade School of Fine Art in London, and from Peking University in Beijing. She pays the bills by being a full-time art gallery manager for Altro Mondo Arte Contemporanea in Manila.



PAULINA ORTEGA is a designer, art director and illustrator based in Sydney, Australia. Her work has been published extensively in the Philippines and has made its little way to Singapore, Malaysia and New York City, among others. Over the years, she has developed concepts for brands like Bench, Barbie, the Ayala Group, Star Trek, and Samsung. This year, she attempts to branch out to the field of visual arts, having exhibited in group shows in Manila. In her spare time, she likes to travel, play with paint and eat popsicles.



STEPH MANUEL is a graphic artist and illustrator who graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Santo Tomas. She has been sharing her work online since she was 14, and has since impressed national publications and even Paramore's lead singer, Hayley Williams. Her dynamic illustrations come to life with bursts of color.



JL JAVIER is a 20-year-old photographer with a degree in Information Design from the Ateneo de Manila University. With his eye for portraiture, he has already made the rounds of local publications at a young age. On the side, he also dabbles in fashion and travel photography.



ALYANA CABRAL graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Journalism from the University of the Philippines Diliman and has written for numerous publications. Apart from being an Esquire intern, Alyana is the vocalist and guitarist of *Ourselves the Elves*, one the best up-and-coming independent bands today. Their latest EP, *Geography Lessons*, is available at ourselvestheelves.bandcamp.com.



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STYLEAGENDA

DEEP BLUE

The award for sports watch of the year goes to (drumroll) the **Tudor Pelagos**. Internationally renowned Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Geneve honored the super diver that raised the bar of watches for sporty lifestyles made up of aquatic adventures. The Pelagos is one of the most complete traditional mechanical divers' watches. Its titanium case, ceramic bezel, and patented auto-adjusting clasp are all designed, developed, and assembled in Tudor's Geneva workshops.



SOUNDS OF TIME

Long before the introduction of electric lighting and illuminated dials, clocks would produce finely-tuned acoustics to indicate time in the dark. For more than two centuries,

Vacheron Constantin has been creating splendid striking watches that are as thin as possible. The Swiss manufacture achieved just that with all-new Patrimony Ultra-Thin Caliber 1731.

The latest minute repeater encased in platinum is just 8.09mm thick and took four years to perfect.



TOASTY TRAVELS

We tropical country dwellers love the thought of layering and winter. If, for the holidays, you get the chance to create warm memories in cold places, bundle up in Heattech and Ultra Light Down collections from **Uniqlo**. Stay fashionably warm with heat-retaining innerwear and compact jackets that are light and easy to pack. To know more about clothing items perfect for winter holiday trips, visit www.uniqlo.com/ph.

Esquire

Man at His Best

DECEMBER 2015 - JANUARY 2016

EDITED BY JONTY CRUZ

2015: An Obituary

GOOD RIDDANCE TO A YEAR OF NOTHINGNESS

BY DICK JOAQUIN

**The first question to ask 2015 before anything else:
What was so great about you, anyway?**

You aren't 2016, where everything is supposed to really, really happen. And you were the worst of the last five years of the Aquino administration. Despite having your share of considerable achievements, like the recently concluded Asia Pacific Economic Conference or APEC (which will be remembered, perhaps unfairly, for the erotic charge that Justin Trudeau and Enrique Peña Nieto brought to the proceedings), you didn't elect a president, impeach a chief justice, or pass any significant legislation. And you can't even blame God for being so blah, given you didn't have a super-typhoon like Haiyan to point fingers at. Unless you count the deaths of the 44 men of the Special Action Forces at the hands of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as a consequence of religious wars being waged in His Name rather than the all too human stupidity and hubris of our politicians. Things seem so bad that Bongbong Marcos is now a viable candidate for the second highest office in the land.

Culturally, you have nothing to show for but the admittedly remarkable success of AlDub, which despite its unprecedented success, was a reaffirmation of conservative entertainment values and groundbreaking only for the numbers it posted in TV viewership and in online activity. In other words, brilliant for being so popular that it kept us distracted enough to remain sane while our public transport systems broke down and traffic became heavier than ever, our Internet being declared officially the slowest but most expensive in our region, and the creeping shadow of China looming larger on our shores.



Apart from that, nothing. No new Up Dharma Down album, no new Eraserheads singles, Butch Dalisay novels, or even a Gregorio Brillantes short story. No Lav Diaz or Mike de Leon movies. (Okay, you had *Heneral Luna* but might it be we overlooked the uneven storytelling or the bad cinematography because we just really wanted and needed to love something rather than have nothing to post about on our social media accounts?) Art? When it's come to a point when patrons buy names on a list even before viewing the work that's on display, or the fact that the biggest news is what an artwork sold for at the auction house, it's all become so boring and safe that even a former *enfant terrible* like Jose Legaspi will resort to rehashing the shock of his earlier drawings and just literally blow them up for his exhibition at Art Fair Philippines. (In commerce, after all, bigger gets better prices.) You suspect everyone, including the artists, is bored.

Sports? Just one name will suffice: Floyd Mayweather.

I could go on, but you get the general idea.

And now we've come to the end. What have you got to show?

But since you were around for 12 months, we will have to remember you, to celebrate because we cannot commemorate your passing. It's often been said: What gives life meaning is death. Try as hard as we might, we can't divine any such thing about yours. If anything, we'd just like to award you the dubious achievement of just being around, even if you gave us nothing much to be grateful for with your presence. But now that's done, you can go fuck off. **✂**



THE REBIRTH OF COOL

If it feels like Subaru set out to sway the popular opinion about wagons, it's probably because the **Subaru Levorg** is an excellent argument against naysayers

The wagon, known elsewhere in the world as the estate, is a polarizing body style that separates car enthusiasts into two widely divided camps. The first is of the opinion that wagons are boring soccer mom cars designed for grocery runs—purely utilitarian and lacking for character. The other half is to those of an opposite opinion: they adore the wagon for its practicality and style.

The two polar opposites are at odds with each other when it comes to the wagon, down to every feature and distinction. But there's no doubt who among them are true enthusiasts: genuine car guys appreciate the wagon. That's why it's a shame that there are only a few manufacturers who offer the unique body style. Luckily, Subaru is among them. Enter the magnificent

Levorg. This is Subaru's latest offering, and it combines the very classy wagon body style with incredibly sporty underpinnings. It's a formula that Subaru knows very well, but this time around, the result is even more refined; even more jaw-dropping.

There's only one thing sexier than a wagon, and that's a sport wagon, which the Levorg is, in every way, shape, and form. Under its beautiful sculpted hood—which features a **scoop** that's about as legit as it gets, we might add—is a 1.6-liter, direct-injection turbocharged boxer engine that packs 170hp and 250NM of torque. Pretty amazing numbers, considering that this motor packs smaller displacement than the previous generation. The combination of direct injection and a twin-scroll turbo results in excellent fuel economy, too, so



that you can have fun without the guilt. It's a car that can haul—in more ways than one.

Think of Subaru's highly-acclaimed **Symmetrical All-Wheel-Drive System** as the icing on the cake. With all four wheels planted firmly and working together, carving corners will quickly become an addiction. Combine this with the SI-Drive system which makes the boxer motor's response more aggressive at the touch of a button, the Levorg immediately dispels all doubt: this is a performance vehicle, not a suburban workhorse.

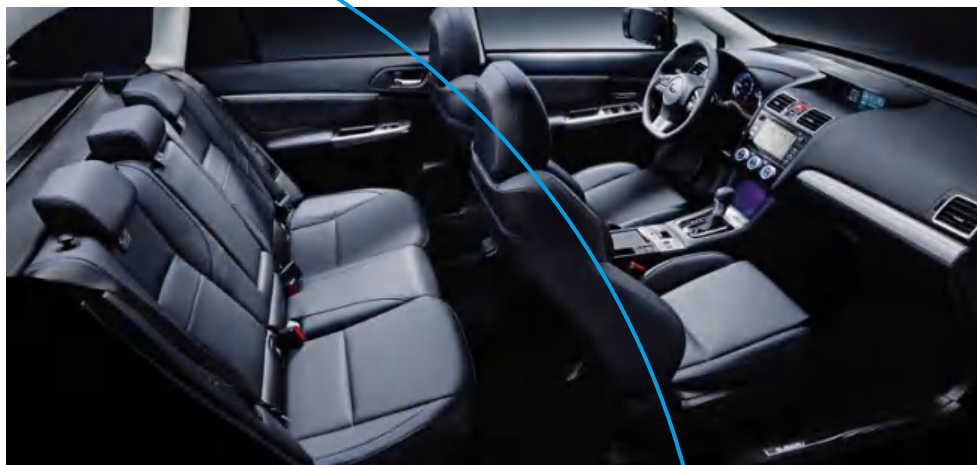
But beyond its gratuitous delivery of the performance features we've come to expect from the hallowed name of Subaru, the Levorg also turns its lens to luxury and functionality. Off the bat, it's got a mean-looking face that's as elegant as it is fearsome. It takes after its predecessors, the WRX and the Legacy—amazing machines that Subaru let loose from its stables and into the annals of rally and race. And yet, its plush interiors are punctuated by lofty functionalities like Smart Entry and a Push-Start Button, a Multi-Function steering wheel, and a **smart infotainment system**. It's spacious enough to seat five, and then some.



“THE LEVORG STAYS TRUE TO SUBARU’S RALLY HERITAGE, BUT OFFERS CIVILITY, COMFORT, AND PRACTICALITY”

Subaru's wagon offers practicality, performance, and luxury in a package like no other.

The Levorg stays true to Subaru's rally heritage, but offers a level of civility, comfort, and practicality that's unheard of in its segment. This is what it means to be cool: to be unusual and uncanny to the uninitiated, but unique, and down right revolutionary. Such is the Levorg. It asserts itself and makes a point: wagons are cool, damned if you don't believe it.



BREAK THROUGH TO A HIGHER LEVEL OF DRIVE

A dramatic, low-key photograph of a car's front end, focusing on the headlight and grille area. The car is dark, with sharp highlights from blue and white light sources creating a sense of motion and intensity. The lighting emphasizes the sleek, aerodynamic lines of the vehicle.

LEVORG



EXCELLENCE

is a necessarily holistic pursuit. It means achieving in different fields, different skills, different disciplines. It's the pinnacle that we aspire to: to be the best of both worlds, to be masters of all trades. The unworthy dismiss it as perfectionism. The truly excellent consider it living life to the fullest. For those who endlessly strive to be better at everything—and not just one thing—the Subaru Levorg was created.



SUBARU

Confidence in Motion

Lost in Transition

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, THE FOLLOWING HONOREES WILL BE AS REMEMBERED AS THIS YEAR'S GUSI PEACE PRIZE RECIPIENTS

BY DICK JOAQUIN



[1]

JUN ABAYA [1]

Even after 117 years, we still shouldn't have an Aguinaldo in government.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN RELATION TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF TRAFFIC LAWS

Yield to the Roman Pope and the Filipino Pope.

OSCAR CRUZ [2]

For a man who speaks so much against everything, he was too scared to be interviewed by Carlos Celdran.

PRISON NURSES

No more Johnny Ponce Enriles to be spongebathed.

FIDEL V. RAMOS

Twenty years later, not every Backstreet Boy deserves a comeback.

TAX RELIEF FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

Hey Middle Class, except in *sangguniang* elections for certain *barangays*, your votes do not count!

TITO BOBOY SYJUCO

Finally, a presidential campaign that addresses the social ills prescribed by our fictionists.

P. BURGOS, MAKATI

Because rich kids ruin everything.

URBANDUB

All farewells should be sudden. Ask Sugarfree.

THE NEXT RAMEN HOUSE TO OPEN

See entry for Tax Relief for the Middle Class.

JIM PAREDES [3]

Never much of a singer, with Twitter he found his voice. Makes you wish he hadn't.

NETIZENS

Now a separate line item in financial reports submitted to the COMELEC

SULPICIO LINES

Whoever was responsible for miraculously allowing it to survive until 2015 deserves canonization.



[3]

WWW.NAUTICA.COM.PH



NAUTICA



[4]



[5]



[6]



[7]

TOBY TIANGCO [4]

Gone but not forgotten.

CINEMALAYA FESTIVAL

Still the worst story in local film.

JAM 88.3

It's like NU 107.5 minus any knowledge of actual music.

KIT TATAD [5]

Most notable achievements in the past include reading Proclamation 1081 while scratching his balls on national television and sporting Nehru collars on the floor of the senate. Has since found God but continues to kiss Lucifer's ass.

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Give them credit for no longer pretending that it's all one big joke.

PAGCOR

It's not gambling if you already know you're getting screwed.

MARTIN ROMUALDEZ

A true man of the people with posters all over North Forbes.

SHOWTIME

Is there anything sadder than giving your own eulogy during your own show?

THE 16TH CONGRESS

Democracy at its finest finery.

RIGOBERTO TIGLAO [6]

The former ambassador to Greece is now spitting nonsense on broadsheets. It's what people call a Greek Tragedy.

BANGSAMORO BASIC LAW

Because who are we kidding, really?

LIBERAL PARTY

Six years later, it still thinks that the Aquino victory was a party victory.

GRINGO HONASAN [7]

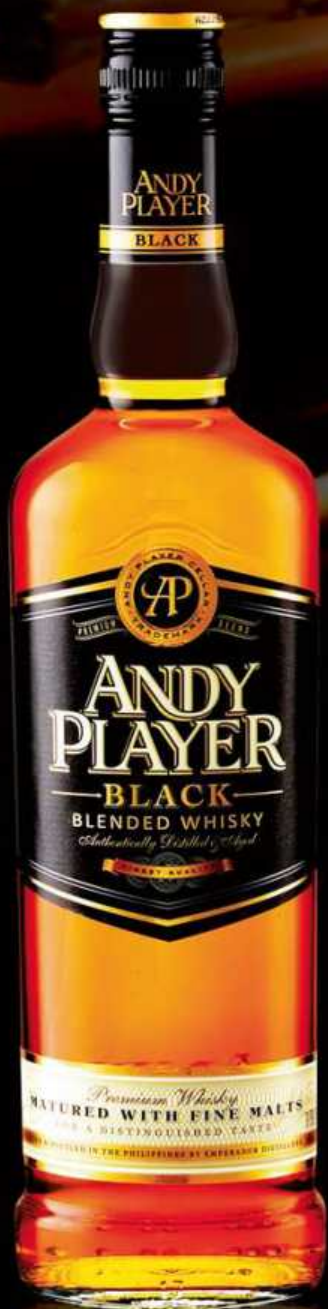
Failed to destroy Philippine democracy (at least twice), is asking for your votes this coming election.

THE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

How many idiots does it take to screw the president?

RECENT HISTORY

Vice President Bongbong Marcos sends his condolences. 



#HaveYouMet**Andy**

Visit www.HaveYouMetAndy.com to learn more.

Drink Responsibly

ASC Ref. No. E003P101415A

Breaking News

JOURNALISM AS WE KNOW IT IS DYING BUT IT SHOULDN'T GO CALMLY INTO THE NIGHT

BY JONTY CRUZ

If you come across the end of TV Patrol these days, you will be greeted by a man dressed in a suit of varied absurd colors moving from side to side, wiggling his legs alongside an animated Christmas elf. This is the face of our local news today. Is it any wonder, then, why we are the way we are? When the news is treated as a joke, how are we supposed to understand everything that is happening around us?

Watching the local news is an ordeal, a challenge to even the most patient and reasonable of people. TV Patrol most especially is the perfect example of the current state of news with its importance on ignorant punditry disguised as reportage, its emphasis on CCTV news, and showcase of “citizen journalism.” Broadcast journalism is dead, and in its place is an ugly hydra of clowns, gossipmongers, and panic pushers; a.k.a. Noli De Castro, Ted Failon, and whichever unlucky woman they put between them. Their success lies solely in their familiarity. They’ve been news anchors for so long that their faces equate to news itself. De Castro and Failon know just how much power and influence they have, and they use it to push whatever agenda they have that day. Primetime news has become pundit hour for people like them, the news playing second fiddle to their opinions. They’ve warped TV journalism into a twisted reality talk show where their views shape the news.

I’d like to believe that this form of stupidity is an isolated case but TV Patrol’s current state is only a symptom of a greater disease. No one is immune to the decline of the fourth estate. Our mainstream broadsheets for instance read like glorified tabloids. Our papers, once owned by pioneers of local journalism, are now under the control of big business, or are being run to the ground by undeserving heirs. And in their waning moments and days of twilight, they choose not to fight the system. They are content to merely fade away.

But the state of media today can’t be blamed on a few old igno-



rant men. It’s reshaped to cater to a new generation that prefers easily digested, bite-size content. Today, instead of having a dedicated team of investigative and long-form journalists, they employ savvy social media experts who condense the news into 140 characters. The media today is reactive. They wait on their asses, fingers resting on keyboards as they wait for the next breaking news to drop.

The fourth estate used to be more than this. They didn’t answer to anyone except the truth. Today they answer to money, or worse, celebrity. To their defense, if you ask anyone in media today, most will say that they are only giving the audience what they want. But what the audience wants isn’t always what it needs. The news has become fast food. Yes it’s become more available but it now caters to the lowest common denomination, and losing all its meaning and value in the process. Look at any news website today and 90 percent of it is fluff and half-baked. Excusing actual content for the promise of clicks.

Aspiring journalists today must now forget all the principles and values they learned in J-school in favor of dumbing down their content for hits. Because at the end of the day, big money and advertisers don’t care about actual news or responsible reporting—they only care about hits. Of course this pales in comparison to media being supplanted by celebrity. These days, it’s the celebrity that reigns supreme. The fourth estate now caters to the whims of the latest starlet or love team or It Girl instead of holding its ground on something far more concrete than fame. Once credible news organizations are now being forced to restructure themselves to look more like TMZ whether they care to admit it or not. It’s become so commonplace that most publications now are too insecure to try anything new and just rely on the comfort that “celebrity always sells,” never occurring to them that this industry wasn’t built to sell celebrities in the first place. Media becomes as shallow and as fleeting as the very people they follow.

Journalism shouldn’t go calmly into the night. Old journalism, real journalism, stood for something that new media will never understand. Journalism is its own goal, the existence of a worthy story more valuable than any number of clicks or shares. It doesn’t need to be viral, or enveloped in the cast off shine of celebrity. There’s already so much stupid in the world; journalism shouldn’t be one of them. **■**

Old journalism, real journalism, stood for something that new media will never understand.



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ROYAL
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Dear Millennials

YOUR TIME IS ALMOST OVER

BY AUDREY N. CARPIO



When the oldest among your generation are starting to have children, you know you're heading towards the inevitable decline. People have spent nearly a decade delineating, discussing, and debating the group of humans born between 1980 and the mid-'90s, although exact brackets shift left or right depending on who's doing the labeling. I'm a late-born Gen Xer, right on the cusp, and if this were an astrological reading, it means I share traits of both signs. So I wield my right to be a crotchety old fart who complains, "they don't make music like they used to," because suddenly anyone with a SoundCloud account and a dubstep app is a "producer." But I also acknowledge my Millennial tendencies—I get all of my news on social media and prefer communication via messaging rather than actual phone calls.

And now I'm seeing, online of course, that Millennials in their late 20s and early 30s have started to procreate, blithely posting photos of their post-partum pride across all networks, even creating IG accounts, FB pages and at the very least, a unique hashtag for these innocents (Gen Xers who have children later in life do this too—it's an Internet thing). I know more about other people's kids than should be necessary, as others may know about mine (or at least the image of a sunlit, magical childhood we try to curate) that I wonder what lasting effect of all this *sharing* will have on the psyche of the child who will one day be old enough to view the collated and very public albums of his or her formative years. Will he feel that his rights to privacy was violated? Will she even have a concept of privacy in the future? Kendall Jenner, a borderline post-Millennial, barely remembers a time without invasive cameras everywhere in her home, thus growing up with a conflated sense of personal identity and public image, reality and "reality." Perhaps this is the future of human consciousness.

Katy Steinmetz, who wrote the cover article "Help, My Parents are Millennials" for Time magazine, describes it this way: "This is the first generation of digital natives bearing digital natives. Social media, for all its good, has also turned parenthood into a stressful public sport. Millennials are trying to manage addictions to smart devices while also keeping their kids away from screens AND making sure their kids understand technology, which will be the key to good jobs."

The average baby is on social media within 57 minutes of being born. It's been predicted that kids who grow up with their videos and pictures plastered all over the Internet won't think it such a big deal, as all of their peers will also have had public identities crafted for them by Like-sourcing parents. These kids will create other identities, private ones that they share in their own personal interactions, maybe even eschewing any significant online presence.

Each person will be a multiverse of identities, but this is nothing new, only more amplified in tech times.

This new batch of babies, who will become part of the post-Millennials and whatever else comes after, is the one you should be wringing your hands over. The post-Millennials (alternately called Generation Z, Generation Edge, or Homelanders, for those in the US), the oldest of whom would be in college or high school now (again, depending on the trend forecaster), are said to be more fluid in terms of gender, racial, and religious identities. "They're intrinsically egalitarian, attuned to fairness not in an activist manner, but in a kind of post-liberal, 'the world is already as it should be' kind of way," says youth culture expert Scott Hess of Spark marketing agency. "They are more global and open in mindset than any previous generation, having grown up with a media operating system that is itself inherently global and inclusive in nature."

A team of strategic researchers called The Sound made a direct comparison of Gen Edge with the Millennials, and where the former are considered entitled, the Edgers are found to be resourceful. They are reformists versus conformists, choose offline experiences instead of online, and value "alternativeness" over authenticity (well, they are being raised by Gen Xers). I'm thinking 19-year-old Tavi Gevinson as a good example, followed by Jaden and Willow Smith, who are 17 and 15 respectively. They're innovative and original, appreciate non-traditional forms of education, and are mature beyond their years. Edgers sound awesome. Move over, Millennials.

It's tradition for the previous generation to malign the one coming in to power. In the workplace and in life, Boomers had to deal with the slackerish Xers, Xers had to make way for and adapt to Millennials, and Millennials in turn will have to adjust to Edgers edging them out. But they're really no different from you as I am from my parents, something I learned especially *after* I became a parent. We're all humans, just arrested in different stages of evolution. 🦋

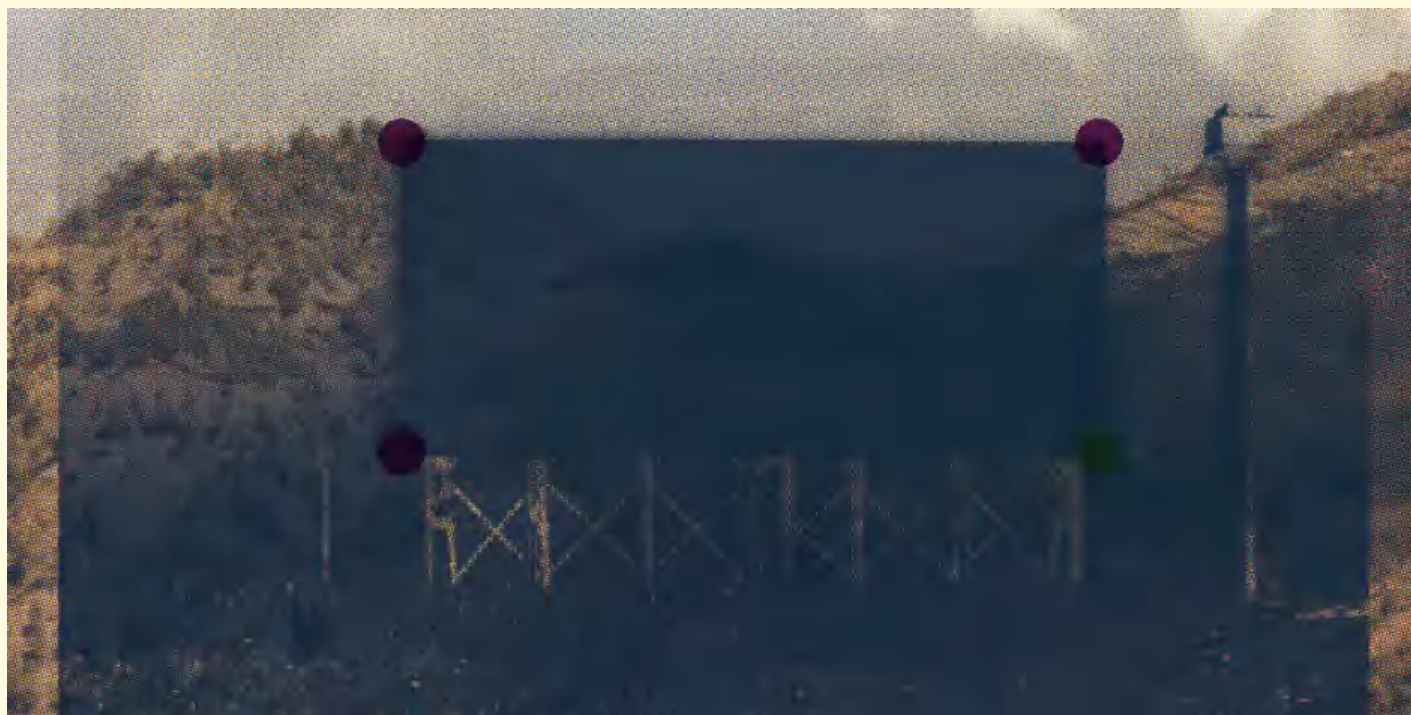
Boomers had to deal with the slackerish Xers, Xers had to make way for and adapt to Millennials, and Millennials in turn will have to adjust to Edgers edging them out.



stokholm

GIORDANO

world without strangers



Confessions of an MMFF Selection Committee Member

THE ABSURD PROCESS OF HOW WE CHOOSE WHAT MOVIES YOU'LL BE SEEING THIS CHRISTMAS

BY PHILBERT ORTIZ DY

It's probably best to get this out of the way: there is nothing particularly sinister going on in the selection of films for the Metro Manila Film Festival. There are probably some potential conflicts of interests here, given the relationships between some of producers and the committee members, but any accusations of graft or patronage are ultimately barking up the wrong tree. The problems of this process are much more basic.

No, the process is too absurd to be sinister. There's no room for corruption when nothing actually matters.

There isn't really much to the selection process. The committee meets a grand total of two times. The first meeting is solely for the purpose of explaining the rules of the selection, which are hardly followed.

We are told that while there are rules, we can't too rigid about them. In the end, what matters is that the right films get in. The second meeting happens after all the scripts have been read. In theory, this is a deliberation session, with the committee discussing the merits of each script in detail, hoping to ascertain what film is worthy of the coveted position as one of the eight films exclusively shown in our cinemas during Christmas time.

In practice, it's about an hour's total of talking about nothing. It's an exercise in empty rhetoric. The committee hardly seems to care about what's actually inside these screenplays. Hardly any of the scripts are discussed. The largest chunk of the discussion is devoted to classifying each of the films under a specific genre. This is meant

to ensure that the committee doesn't select too many similar films. A good long time is spent arguing whether a certain film is a horror/comedy or a comedy/horror. The debate over that distinction goes on for quite a while.

But this doesn't really matter, either. If the committee really wants a movie in the lineup, then it'll be in the lineup. The committee will go through all sorts of semantic gymnastics to argue that one romantic comedy is actually more of a comedy while the other romcom is more of a romance.

Because all that matters is what the committee believes will draw. It probably should be mentioned that the interest most represented in this committee is that of the theater owners. Their representatives seem to dominate the discussion. And this



TAG HEUER ANNOUNCES TOM BRADY AS THE NEW BRAND AMBASSADOR AND LAUNCHES THE NEW CARRERA - HEUER 01

New York, NY October 13, 2015 – TAG Heuer is proud to announce that Tom Brady, star quarterback of the New England Patriots, and four time Super Bowl champion, is now part of the brand's family.

TAG Heuer and Tom Brady celebrated the announcement in New York City on Tuesday night at the launch event for the Carrera - Heuer 01. Jean-Claude Biver, President of the LVMH Group Watch Division and CEO of TAG Heuer, called the night's special guest onstage and surprised attendees by officially introducing Brady as a TAG Heuer ambassador.

Brady presented the new Carrera - Heuer 01, a timepiece that honors the brand's heritage and symbolizes the evolution of the Calibre 1887. The Carrera - Heuer 01 is the first of a new collection that will feature a new case, construction, design and calibre. The dial side reveals the chronograph controls and an openwork date disc while the case-back includes a red column wheel, and a skeleton chronograph bridge. The piece also features a new generation TAG Heuer case, made from steel for greater shock resistance. The construction has progressed from the traditionally used single piece to a modular with twelve different components, allowing for an infinite combination of materials, colors, treatments and finishes. The look is finished with a black perforated rubber strap.

Mr. Biver and Brady were joined by actress Molly Sims, who served as the MC for the night, as well as DJ Eve, whose original set further added to the party atmosphere. Guests had the pleasure of watching Brady throw signed footballs to raise money for Best Buddies, a charitable organization that offers the opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to develop social, leadership and employment skills for greater participation in the community.

Several guests were lucky enough to catch the signed footballs that Brady threw into the crowd and took home a special souvenir from the night.

Jean-Claude Biver, President of the LVMH Group Watch Division and CEO of TAG Heuer, stated: "We are thrilled to have Tom Brady as a representative of TAG Heuer and are looking forward to taking part in the beloved tradition of American football. Tom embodies the principals of perseverance, strength, and illustrates an unwavering commitment to excellence in the face of pressure. He personifies the #Don'tCrackUnderPressure mindset."

Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots, declared: "I am thrilled to be part of the TAG ambassador team. I have always admired the craftsmanship of a luxury timepiece and the new Carrera 1 is no exception. The first nice watch I purchased was a TAG. So, it looks like I've now come full circle with this admired company".



TAGHeuer
SWISS AVANT-GARDE SINCE 1860

Because right now, there is no incentive for anyone to put in their best effort in submitting a film to the MMFF.

is reasonable to some extent. The theaters are burdened with a lot of the risk that comes with the MMFF. If they are to give up screening Hollywood's big holiday releases, then it follows that they should have some say in what gets screened. They stand to lose a lot of money if no one comes out to see these locally made productions.

They will happily cop to how the MMFF is a commercial exercise, and how their goal is to raise revenues year after year. And this selection process really is all for show. The theaters are part of corporations, and corporate thinking tends to favor known quantities. It doesn't matter what's in the script. All that matters are the names attached to those scripts. Vice Ganda, Kris Aquino, and Vic Sotto are automatically accepted, regardless of how good or bad the scripts are. Some of the committee might opine, even, that the Kris Aquino script is really terrible. But it has to go in, because Kris Aquino is a known quantity.

And so there is no real incentive to submitting a quality script to the MMFF. In fact, most of these screenplays feel like placeholders. They are first drafts at best, and just loosely assembled garbage at worst. And this committee doesn't really care. In the first meeting, it is explicitly said that the potential profitability of a film trumps the quality of the script. We are told that even if we get a script that isn't technically completed, it is okay to let it through if it's got the right stars.

Where this should actually get more interesting is in the selection of the bottom four films. Since these films aren't expected to do as well as the others, then the pressure should be off to find the most "profitable" picture.

But the discussion here is equally as pointless. At one point in the process, the committee is made to decide between two

historical pictures. It is actually in the rules that the committee should try to find films of cultural value, and this has been interpreted as a basic quota for historical period films. There has to be just one.

On one side, *Lakambini*, a film about Gregoria de Jesus by Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil and Jeffrey Jeturian. On the opposite corner, *Hermano Pule*, a film about Apolinario de la Cruz by Gil Portes. *Lakambini* is by far the better script, and I fought for its inclusion. I was told that *Lakambini* is just a small film, and that *Hermano Pule*, with its battles, is the film more deserving of inclusion.

I argued that the largeness of the production is a point against *Hermano Pule*. Since these films aren't expected to make any money, it would be better for the festival to pick a film that has a lot less to lose. And then it was pointed out that Gil Portes has a history of not completing films, which was inexplicably put forward as an argument for *Hermano Pule* and not against it. It was suggested that *Lakambini*, since it was already in production and likely to be completed, should be placed as a backup in case Portes repeated history.

Baffled, I argued that we should probably just pick the film that's going to be completed. Rather than discuss this further, the matter was put to a vote. I was the only one who voted for *Lakambini*. As predicted, Gil Portes did not complete *Hermano Pule*. *Lakambini* did not replace it, because they weren't able to complete the film, either. *Lakambini* might have gotten the money they needed to finish production if it was included in the lineup. But it wasn't, so it didn't. So after all that hullabaloo, there isn't a historical period film in the lineup. Given how the theaters have treated historical period films in the MMFF, this might have been the plan all along.

After about an hour into the second meeting, the committee has a full lineup of eight films. It is then that the process gets truly absurd. The rules of the selection outline a procedure for voting. We are to score each of the submitted scripts individually, broken down into several criteria. An accounting firm is even hired to tabulate the scores, maintaining the legitimacy of the process. But of course, this is all nonsense. The committee has already decided what the films are supposed to be, and are just told to score accordingly. I ask what would happen if the scores didn't reflect the list that was already written, and I'm told it would be unlikely, unless someone on the committee was trying to sabotage the process.

This is the reality of the MMFF. It isn't that people are trying to put together a bad festival. It isn't that we are trying to pick bad films. It's just that the only thing this committee as a whole cares about is repeating past success. There is a lot of talk about how much money this festival makes, how the revenue targets are growing every year. There is not much talk about which of the scripts are actually good. There is no arguing for quality, or against a script with a star attached, no matter how dismal it is. Selection is a matter of numbers. The committee's got it down to an absurd science.

The MMFF could be a good thing. It could be a place to showcase the best of Filipino cinema. It could launch careers and foster a healthier, more competitive film industry in this country. It could be the place to raise the discourse of Filipino cinema. But that would require thinking in the long term. That would require letting go of the numbers for a little while, and trusting that Filipino audiences will gravitate towards quality in the end. Because right now, there is no incentive for anyone to put in their best effort in submitting a film to the MMFF. Without the right names attached, there's a good chance it won't even factor into the discussion.

I died a little in that room. I had no illusions coming in of being able to change anything, but I still emerged disappointed. To be in that room is to stare into the void, to understand that nothing means anything, and that all action and passion are ultimately useless. We are up against an entrenched absurdity. There is no fixing it. To save the MMFF, we must destroy it. We have to start over. ■

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

THE **LEICA SL SYSTEM** MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OF PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY



The rise of the smartphone that promises top-quality photo and video has pressured camera manufacturers to step up their game. With the release of the Leica SL, the German manufacturer is making a strong case in convincing hardcore enthusiasts and professional photographers that the need for a real camera is alive and well.

Better known for its compact rangefinders, Leica has always been in the frontline of photojournalism and iconic photography. With the Leica SL, the legendary camera maker is preserving its heritage of capturing the true, iconic soul of photography, but with new, innovative technology to boot.

Designed specifically for professional photographers, the Leica SL mirrorless system has superior features that guarantee exceptional imaging performance:

OPTICAL OPTIONS

The SL system has three lenses available so far: a Leica Vario-Elmarit-SL 24-90mm f/2.8-4 will be launched with the camera. A Leica APO-Vario-Elmarit-SL 90-280mm f/2.8-4 will arrive in early 2016, and a Leica Summilux-SL 50 mm f/1.4 will hit the market in late 2016. But what makes the SL-system special is that it's compatible with almost all Leica lenses ever made. Until more SL-specific lenses are released, users can mount other Leica lenses on the SL with an adapter.



BACK VIEW

On the back of the Leica SL is the first electronic viewfinder that features new technology called Leica EyeRes. The EVF offers an entirely new visual experience, which shows a preview of the final image before the shutter release is pressed. Plus, on the back is a 2.95" touchscreen LCD that displays a 170-degree viewing angle.

SUPER SPEED

The Leica SL makes it possible to capture images at speeds and resolutions never seen before. It boasts what Leica is calling "the fastest autofocus on any camera", 2GB buffer memory, and Maestro II series processor can churn out 11 frames per second at the full 24-megapixel resolution.

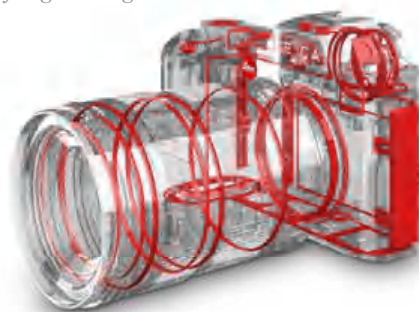


CINEMATIC CAPTURE

Video on the SL fulfills even the most stringent demands of filmmakers. It enables the production of professional videos in 4K resolution at 24 frames per second, or in UHD at 30fps.

PHOTOGRAPHY BUFF

Leica has always hand-crafted its cameras to be resilient and robust. The SL is just as rugged. Its aluminum body makes the camera an ideal tool for rough, everyday conditions faced by professional photographers. The Leica SL is another example of Leica's fine art of engineering.



LEICA STORE PHILIPPINES IS THE OFFICIAL DISTRIBUTOR AND RETAILER OF LEICA CAMERA PRODUCTS IN THE PHILIPPINES. THE STORE IS LOCATED AT LOWER GROUND FLOOR, GREENBELT 5, AYALA CENTER, MAKATI. FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT +632 729 5567.



The End of an Endless Journey

KIDLAT TAHIMIK'S LATEST FILM IS THREE DECADES IN THE MAKING

BY PHILBERT ORTIZ DY

Kidlat Tahimik started work on *Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment* over 35 years ago. It has only previously existed as a work-in-progress, with the assembled footage of a biography of Magellan's slave, Enrique de Malacca, strung together with narration from the director. People who had seen it in that form never forgot about it, the ambition contained within those frames transcending what seemed to be possible for a Filipino independent filmmaker. But with so little progress over the next few decades, many lost hope of ever seeing the film completed.

And yet here we are in 2015, the film now solidly in existence. It has taken quite a journey since its inception, and it has certainly taken on quite a different form since those first shots were committed to film. But it is around. It exists, and it has been screened several times this year. It is, for all intents and purposes, a finished film.

Except it isn't. I write about this film having seen it at the Tokyo International Film Festival. There, he was showing version 3.5. If someday you get to see this film, it will likely be a little different from what I saw. *Balikbayan #1* continues to evolve as it travels the world. Like its subject, it seems to be changing and growing as it travels from port to port.

There are basically three portions of this film. The original 16mm footage shot over three decades ago has remained mostly intact. These scenes compose a pretty straightforward telling of the story of Enrique, who the film puts forward as the first person to actually circumnavigate the world. The film layers a post-colonial shade atop the mythology of the great explorer. It posits that Enrique was there for all the important moments, and was a bright, important figure in the life of Magellan.

The second portion is made up of scenes shot more recently in Baguio, following a character played by the director's son Kawayan as he searches for a mysterious man who keeps showing up in his photographs. The film explores themes of reincarnation and the discovery of roots as it takes a tour through the Baguio art scene.

And then the film presents an ending about 100 minutes in. "The End of the Endless Journey," the film declares, before launching into a third portion. Here, the film becomes its own behind-the-scenes

feature. It shares the journey taken to bring this film into existence, which includes the search for galleons, the study of languages, and an epic trip around the world that found the director attempting to pay tribute to Enrique in his own very unique way.

The movie is biopic, travelogue, behind-the-scenes featurette, and family video all at once. It does feel like a culmination of 35 years of work, despite knowing that there are huge gaps where Kidlat Tahimik wasn't actually working on the film. That doesn't actually matter, in the long run. It's clear that the director has poured himself fully into this work, that in the decades that passed, these ideas were never far from his mind.

The question that naturally follows is, "what's next?" After 35 years in limbo, over three decades of working on the same project, what does a director like Kidlat Tahimik do next? I'm not entirely sure that there's anywhere to go after this, that there's any other project that would be worthy of his time. Perhaps he will go on re-editing this picture, adding to it, subtracting from it, and delivering new versions to every little corner of the world. Endings are a Western concept, after all. Here in the East, in the land of Enrique de Malacca, we believe in reincarnation, in the endless journey through existence. The most subversive thing that Kidlat Tahimik could do is to work on this film forever, taking audiences through a cinematic cycle of rebirth with every new incarnation. **✎**

If someday you get to see this film, it will likely be a little different from what I saw.

BACK INTO THE DEEP

The critically acclaimed Oris Aquis Depth Gauge returns, now with a blackened case and a yellow rubber strap

The Oris Aquis Depth Gauge was hailed by the international press as one of the most innovative diving watches of the century when it was launched in 2013. It answered the challenge of how to build a depth gauge into a mechanical watch. It had a pioneering depth gauge function, developed and patented by Oris.

In keeping with the company's 111-year heritage, Oris's solution to producing a mechanical watch with a depth gauge was pragmatic, with an inlet in the crystal at 12 o'clock. Beneath that was a channel milled into the outside edge of the crystal covering the dial. The inlet allowed water into the channel, creating a watermark that corresponded to yellow depth gauge indications marked on the crystal, giving the diver a clear readout to a depth of 100 meters. Gaskets between the crystal and the case meant the watch was still water-resistant to 50 bar (500 meters).

PRODUCT FEATURES:

- Automatic movement Oris Cal. 733, based on Sellita SW 200-1, with date window at 6 o'clock
- Multi-piece 46mm stainless steel case, screw-in case back and crown protection with black DLC coating. Water-resistant to 50 bar/500 meters
- Diver's unidirectional revolving top ring with tungsten inlay and minute scale
- Sapphire crystal, double domed with anti-reflective coating on both sides, featuring a milled channel that allows water into the watch as part of the depth gauge function
- Black dial with applied indices and Nickel hands, both with white Super-LumiNova® inlay
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- Set includes waterproof case, additional black rubber strap and strap-change tools

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HEAD WAITER ROD MALABRIGO LOOKS BACK ON NEARLY 30 YEARS AT THE INTERCON.

Goodnight, Sweet Prince

THE VENERABLE PRINCE ALBERT ROTISSERIE SERVES ITS LAST STEAK

BY AUDREY N. CARPIO

Prince Albert, for four decades, has always had its category of loyal clientele: CEOs, high-ranking government officials, movers and shakers of society. Not so much celebrities, or young upstarts—the restaurant is enduringly untrendy, resistant to change, and wears its old-fashionedness like a pair of starched cuffs. This was the kind of serious place one's parents and grandparents went to, and for the same thing always: the prime rib. Service was discreet and personalized, and many high-profile men have felt comfortable enough to take women who were not their wives there to dine.

The InterContinental Manila announced that it would be closing down for good on December 31. After 46 years, the Philippines' very first five-star hotel will be turned over to Ayala Land. Some say it has overstayed its welcome, a fading remnant of its '80s/'90s glory days. Nobody has attempted any protest movements to "save" the InterCon, despite it being a Leandro Locsin-designed building. The hotel was witness to Philippine political history during a 1989 coup attempt, but even a heritage buff like Carlos Celdran barely gave a shrug to the news of the shuttering of the once-grand dame


of hotels. Its beloved Prince Albert Rotisserie, however, is a different story, and will go down in restaurant history as a true classic, but perhaps nobody will miss it as much as Rod Malabrigo.


Prince Albert's head waiter has been with the InterCon for 29 years, and in those 29 years he has never had a Christmas holiday, a New Year's Eve night off, nor a Father's Day, and especially not a Valentine's Day. But he has no regrets. Malabrigo started out as a banquet waiter and worked at the hotel's different outlets from Gambrinus to Jeepney Cafe and Where Else? When he was made a regular employee after one year, he promised himself that each year would mark an achievement of a different goal. He would be a model employee. And he was—for three consecutive years, he had perfect attendance. He rose up the ranks, from busboy to waiter, to captain and sommelier. He has been sent all over the world for training and received VIP treatment himself in hotels abroad, when the GMs would find out his provenance was the famed Prince Albert.

"I love Intercon. I was so sad when they announced the closing," Malabrigo says. "Prince Albert is my second home. Every day, I

A man with dark hair and a light beard is sitting on a dark blue, tufted leather armchair. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a blue tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His legs are crossed at the ankles, and he is wearing brown leather brogue shoes. The background is a dark, textured wall with horizontal lines. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the texture of the chair and shoes.

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1



2

1 THE END OF AN ERA OF TRADITIONAL FINE DINING AND FRENCH TABLESIDE SERVICE.

2 PHOTOS FROM CARLOS P. ROMULO'S LIFE HANGS IN THE PRIVATE DINING ROOM NAMED IN HONOR OF THE PRINCE ALBERT FREQUENTER.

would leave my house at eight in the morning and get back at one in the morning. Then I still had to help with my kids' homework. It was very difficult, but I love it." His son had his wedding reception in the Intercon ballroom. There will be many other memories for Rod to take with him, but the defining experience of working at Prince Albert was getting to know all the bigwigs. "I met all the highest government officials, GMs, presidents. I'd introduce myself and give them my card. When they need a reservation or a special table, they'd just call me." In return, he was helped by many when it came to visa applications and the like. They were mutually beneficial relationships.

Just who are the VIPs who regularly enjoyed the prime rib, the tableside service, the crepe samurai? "Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano likes to sit here with his mom. Sir Ramon Ang, over there or there. Mr. Chen, here," Malabrigo says, pointing to corner tables or the private and stately Carlos P. Romulo room, whose ghost purportedly haunts the establishment. "Katrina Enrile always orders the pepper steak. Charlie Cojuangco just comes here for the pepper steak or the steak tartare, nothing else. PNoy has only been here twice. But this was a favorite place of Gloria's." President Estrada, he adds, would hand the servers additional money if he noticed that other customers didn't leave a tip. One wonders where Mr. Coyiuto, who dines there at least once a week, will be spending his lunch hours now.

Malabrigo has on occasion helped a philandering customer or two escape when the wife would happen to walk in the restaurant. "We led one guy out through the loading bay. Whatever happens in Prince Albert doesn't leave Prince Albert," he chortles knowingly. Of course, back in the '80s/'90s there were only handful of fine dining establishments, so the action seemed disproportionately centered in Prince Albert. And whatever transpired here under Malabrigo's nose can probably fill column inches worth of gossip, but will disappear in dust with the building itself.

Amid the rise and fall of many other fashionable restaurants through the years, the menu of Prince Albert has scarcely changed. The prime rib and the French onion soup are prepared the exact same way since day one (the original chef is said to haunt the oven). They have since added pasta dishes, and you can even find quinoa in the current salad buffet, but by and large what you get at Prince Albert is the same fare you'll find at a classic bistro in France, and it's this same fare that loyal customers keep coming back for.

December is the final month of service for the staff of Prince Albert. Throughout this month, distinguished chefs who have called the Intercon home at some point in their careers will return to each execute a special dinner: chef Jessie Sincioco, chef Billy King, chef Cyrille Soenen. December 31 will be the last night of service ever, and after the last guest leaves, Rod Malabrigo will close the curtains to the Carlos P. Romulo room one final time and bid adieu to the restaurant he gave his life to, but in return gave him so many great opportunities. Malabrigo's future is safe; offers from as near as Makati Avenue to as far as Singapore and Hong Kong have been coming in, and often he has no idea upon whose recommendation. He hasn't decided yet where he'll don his next uniform, the only thing he knows is that he'll finally take a few months off and treat his wife to a European holiday. It's about time. **FB**

"Whatever happens in Prince Albert doesn't leave Prince Albert."



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The Death of Local

THE PREMIUM ON LOCALLY SOURCED INGREDIENTS, AFTER GAINING HARD-EARNED TIME IN THE LIMELIGHT, IS ONCE AGAIN BEING OUSTED BY THE IMPORTED, JUST SO WE CAN HAVE SOMETHING NEW TO BRAG ABOUT

BY YVETTE TAN

News flash: local is out; imported is, once again, in.

Like all fads, the premium on dining on locally sourced, organic ingredients is slowly fading, replaced by its evil, and equally overpriced sibling, imported ingredients. The more of them flown in, the better. Restaurants have been popping up that are proud of the fact that almost everything on their ingredients list, even basic items readily available in the country, is imported. I'm not talking about ingredients that are hard to source locally or the ones specific to a region or country; I'm talking about items like flour, seafood, and poultry. You know, things you can get at the market or the grocery store, or if one is really picky (as one has the right to be), especially sourced to one's specifications from one of the many quality suppliers available in the Philippines.

The reason for this is simple: authenticity, or the perception thereof. It's what drives many a hipster manifesto, and it's what's behind a bunch of restaurants are using as their selling point—a taste of authentic (insert place of origin) in Manila. Why would a company spend arguably more money importing basic ingredients that it could get locally? Questionable claims of better taste and quality aside, it all comes down to giving their guests bragging rights, and more profit.

Humans are, for the most part, awful creatures. Since the dawn of time, homo sapiens have been looking for ways to make themselves feel better by making other people feel horrible about themselves. How they do this changes over the years, though some things remain constant—what you wear, where you live, who you marry, what your last name is. What you eat has always been part of the list, but never has it been more pronounced than today.

Social media hasn't helped; upping the "my life is better than yours" game to bloated proportions. Status messages, especially status messages with pictures attached to them, has made bragging easier, the words and images traversing time and distance, forever posted on your Facebook page, even, apparently, if you choose to delete them. Instagram, in particular, has led the charge on lifestyle bragging. The app is built around people posting photos of where they are, who they're with, and what they are eating; each shot carefully lit and constructed, each caption listing pertinent information, from each ingredient and its source to whose kitchen the whole thing emerged from.

For a while, it seemed that bragging, be it on social media or in real life, was taking a surprisingly altruistic turn as people turned their attention towards what was local. Sure, people posted that they were eating organic, humblebragging about how expensive it was compared to the regular stuff in supermarkets. People were suddenly experts, concerned about GMOs (Genetically Modified



Organisms) appearing on their plate, forgetting the simple fact that, while yes, radically treating plants with chemicals and pesticides can be bad, literally everything we eat has been genetically modified in one way or another through selective breeding to better serve our consumption purposes. Our tomatoes today are completely different from the tomatoes of yore.

Don't get me wrong; relying on local is a good thing. There have been advocates for locally sourcing ingredients for the longest time, but until the movement became mainstream (Thanks, hipsters!), proponents were mostly thought of as hippy dreamers whose preference for non-perfect insecticide-laden produce obviously meant they had been smoking too much of whatever it is hippies smoke. But thanks to an internationally-led initiative to value what can be found, sometimes literally, in our own backyard, many people have begun to embrace the buy-local lifestyle, purchasing locally grown produce because of its lesser carbon footprint, as well as the livelihood it provides local farmers (who remain some of the most severely overworked and underpaid citizens, by the way. And you thought your work conditions were bad).

Suddenly, people who were concerned about bringing back heirloom plants and heritage livestock became heroes. Farmers were being lauded for their efforts, and a young and vibrant generation of social entrepreneurs were trying to bridge the gap between farmer and consumer. Finally, it seemed like doing good and looking good had found common ground. It seemed like we were shedding the yoke of colonialism and loving our own.

But alas, this trend may just be that: a trend. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and in this case, the reaction to going local is to import everything. In a perfect world, we would ignore this blatant marketing bid and stick to what's good for us, our economy, and the country, continuing our patronization of local produce and livestock, which, in a perfect world, would lead to an awareness of our food systems and our severely inadequate food laws, which would in turn lead to a demand for a respect for our foodways and a total revamp of our national food policy. In a perfect world, this would then lead to better food distribution systems, which would, in a perfect world, lead to the eradication of hunger in the Philippines.

But we don't live in a perfect world, and, whether we like it or not, are quite subject to what's currently 'in.' It just so happens that the latest fad seems to be eating dishes that cost a lot of cash and energy to import onto one's plate.

The love for local is dead. Imported items reign supreme once again, just like they always did. After all, the only thing that ultimately matters is how good a dish will look on social media. ■

STAND THE HEAT

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: 36-inch Six Burner 5 Series Dual Fuel Range; 48-inch Six Burner with Griddle Dual Fuel Range, 36-inch Four Burner with Griddle Dual Fuel Range; all by VIKING Range

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The Jeepney's Last Ride

ONCE THE INSPIRING SYMBOL OF THE FILIPINO SPIRIT, THE JEEPNEY TODAY IS PROOF OF EVERYTHING THAT'S WRONG WITH OUR SOCIETY

BY KITTY CRUZ

Get rid of the jeepneys.

It's a simple condition. If you want a corruption-free system, then stop handing out P500 to fixers for your driver's license. If you want change, open your city up to the APEC leaders. And if you want a real public transportation system—a mostly-reliable, high-occupancy, affordable-to-all system as effective as it could possibly be given the density of Manila—then get rid of the jeepneys.

Is it insensitive to say the jeepney is unnecessary? Sentimentality is always the argument: that the jeepneys are symbols of Filipino creativity and ingenuity, a manifestation of the fiesta that our communities are so proud of. But sentimentality has ruled us for so long—and this celebration of freedom and democracy has become a license for laziness.

It is not extremist to say this truth: the jeepney can't fall in line because it doesn't want to. While bus systems in Japan or Europe are monopolized by a single entity, individuals own their jeeps. The jeepney system is a free market—intense competition, standard prices, equal offering—but it only works best in theory. It takes its title as king of the road, clearly subscribing to its only set of rules. And obviously this entrepreneurship system of self-owned, self-manned vehicles has failed us.

A bus obviously does not equate to a jeepney, and vice versa. But, more than anything else, the difference between these two is cul-

tural. The *pasabit* habit, the abrupt stops at a passenger's para, the driver's multiple roles including navigator and cashier, the routes inaccessible to those who aren't local—all of which don't contribute in the least to an already malignant public transportation system.

Admittedly, there are many different solutions to everyone's most pressing, daily problem of traffic, none of them involving the dismissal of a cultural icon. There are carpool lanes, new coding schemes, even the recentralization of agencies from the capital. But the jeepney is so symptomatic of what ails us. Barring a driver working hard to make a living, the jeepney is the Filipino at his worst.

We do not aim to Westernize our culture, our values, or even our transportation, but it is the exact image of a jeepney cutting through the roads of Manila that parallels the undisciplined mindset of every Filipino from top to bottom; if they can get away with it, they will. And the reason we can't rise together is simple: we won't let it happen.

There is no overnight solution to transportation. Makati wasn't built to be the central business district—the population of government agencies and high-density towers on Ayala Avenue was originally a short-term solution to pressing matters. Today it bears the brunt of 15 million people going in and out of it everyday, when the CBD was always supposed to be Quezon City.


But sustainable, well-executed urban design could right many wrongs. Bogotá, Colombia, for example, mirrored Manila in many ways—immobilizing traffic and congestion, lack of infrastructure, a powerful few holding the fate of a greater public. Its highly privatized bus system was in shambles, with the people feeling the consequences of extreme competition among companies. Not to mention that it came with a very specific connotation: the bus, for the longest time, was viewed as transportation for the poor.

The solution for Bogotá came in the form of its bus rapid transit (BRT) system, wherein each large bus traveled throughout the city holding up to 160 passengers. By design, it was highly efficient: buses had dedicated lanes that were level with its flooring, where they could pick up passengers—including the elderly or handicapped, all of whom had already paid at the station—with ease. But there is a dimension of social equality that comes in the details: small, feeder buses go where the large ones can't, in order to reach outlying areas. The ticket price is the same, no matter how near or how far a passenger rides, making the system fair to everyone, no matter their property value. Bicycle paths and pedestrian zones were added to increase accessibility, each one connected to the BRT system for a seamless route. And Enrique Peñalosa did all this in the four years that he was mayor from 1998 to 2001.

Urban planning is straightforward. The creation of an effective, logical plan for a city or a central district will vary mostly in the specifics of where to put what or what to put where, but there's generally an ideal: Create a centralized area, break up into high-density buildings, then move into circumferential low-density buildings until you end up in the suburbs.

But we don't get to hit refresh and see a grid of black and white where we can line up the perfect mix of trees and towers and toddlers to make the perfect city. The reality is, Manila has no chance for a blank slate.

We can keep riding the jeepney. We can do as we do, everyday, all day, for the rest of our lives. We can accept the society that we want to change but don't.

Or we can say goodbye and give everyone the chance to start again. 

Sentimentality has ruled us for so long—and this celebration of freedom and democracy has become a license to laziness.

Marcos Knows Best

ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY...
AND MAKES AWFUL LAWS, APPARENTLY

BY OLIVER X.A. REYES

When President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, among the first things he did was grant himself, and only to himself, the power to make the laws of the Philippines. With great power comes great responsibility. With absolute power, ah fuck it.

CREATING MILITARY TRIBUNALS TO TRY PORNOGRAPHY CASES. To be accurate about it, the military tribunals created during martial law by Presidential Decree No. 39 had jurisdiction over any offense where the penalty exceeded six years in prison. When the penalties for creating or distributing obscene literature were increased in 1976 to at least six years in prison, the power to seize and examine those smuggled Playboy magazines now fell with the military generals.

GRANT PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO RONNIE NATHANIELSZ. In 1973, Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 192, granting Filipino citizenship to Ronald Fredrick William Nathanielsz, formerly a citizen of Ceylon, as a reward for “his long and continuous service to the Filipino people, in the field of journalism.” While Nathanielsz has confined himself to sports journalism in the last 25 years, his greatest notoriety came as the anchor and booster-in-chief of the egregiously pro-dictator government TV network MBS-4.

CRIMINALIZING RUMOR-MONGERING. According to Presidential Decree No. 90, the spread of rumors, false news, or information and gossip undermined the stability of the government and the objective of the New Society. The penalty for offering, publishing, distributing, circulating, and spreading these rumors—a prison term of between six months to six years.

CRIMINALIZING WANG-WANG. Presidential Decree No. 96 professes care for your mental stability, noting that “much of the chaotic conditions from which our people have suffered are the direct result of indiscriminate and unregulated use of sirens, bells, horns, whistles, and similar gadgets that emit exceptionally loud or startling sounds.” Marcos made it a crime for private citizens to install these devices on their motor vehicles, punishable by imprisonment for six months.

JAILING DOCTORS WHO DON'T REPORT TREATMENT OF INJURIES TO THE POLICE. Presidential Decree No. 169 imposed a one-to three-year jail term on doctors who failed to report to the Philippine Constabulary “by the fastest means of communication” if they had treated any person for serious or less serious physical injuries. While such a law ostensibly could serve the public good (such as en-

suring punishment for those who inflict domestic violence), it also dissuaded Marcos-era “subversives” from seeking proper medical care.

JAIL TIME FOR EXPORTERS OF ABACA SEEDLINGS. Perhaps exporting abaca seedlings is, as Presidential Decree No. 216 states, “detrimental to the abaca industry and the overall economy of the country.” But imprisonment for between six months to 12 years?

REQUIRING ROTC GRADS TO NOTIFY MILITARY BEFORE LEAVING COUNTRY. Under Presidential Decree No. 183, all reservists of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (i.e. ROTC graduates) were required to notify the Armed Forces of the Philippines before leaving the country, otherwise their passports or travel clearances would not be validated. The same decree also curiously (given this was in 1973) required the National Computer Center to “render such technical assistance as may be necessary in the updating and analysis of records of reservists.”

THE CRIME OF BEGGING AND GIVING TO BEGGARS. The Mendicacy Law of 1978, while remaining in place, is among the least enforced laws of the land. The penalty for an adult who uses “begging as a means of living” instead of applying themselves “to some lawful calling” may run as high as imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years. A person who gives alms to beggars is punished by a fine not exceeding 20 Pesos.

OUTLAWING PINBALL AND SLOT MACHINES. The reason for the ban, according to Presidential Decree No. 519, was that “the proliferation of these gambling devices adversely affects the moral regeneration program of the Government under the New Society, especially the youth.”

THE BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE LAWS OF NATURE AND THE EFFORTS OF MAN TO CONQUER SPACE. If you ever wondered why we have a National Planetarium, BALN-EMCS is the reason invoked by Presidential Decree No. 804-A.

TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR 1974 MISS UNIVERSE CONTESTANTS. These days, Congress has to pass a law to grant tax exemptions. Back in 1974, Marcos could dictate who would be exempt from what taxes. He used that power through Presidential Decree No. 486 to exempt “all prizes in cash or in kind, including talent fees and gifts” given to participants of the Miss Universe pageant held that year at the Folk Arts Theater.

TWO HOURS OF DAILY PUBLIC SERVICE PRIME-TIME PROGRAMMING FOR TV/RADIO. Presidential Decree No. 576-A required all radio and TV stations to allocate two hours of their prime-time programming to “programs rendering public service.” “Public service” referred to “news, educational, and cultural presentations and other programs informing the people of advances in science, industry, farming, and technology; of policies and important undertakings in government designed to promote or safeguard the public welfare; of matters related to the physical, intellectual, and moral development of the young; or of traditions, values, and activities which constitute the cultural heritage of the nation.” In short, featuring Imelda in a lab coat touring the *kabukiran* surrounded by children bearing garlands. 🇵🇭

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE DAPPER

Grooming tips for the holiday season

In the course of just one night, the office Christmas party can bump up your status from workplace nerd to office hunk. So instead of waiting for the New Year to upgrade your look, give your officemates an early Christmas treat and a preview of what's coming in 2016. With these 5 easy steps to look razor sharp this holiday season, you're sure to make that moment under the mistletoe go smoother than a choir of angels.

1.) Touch up your 'do

A couple of days before the Christmas party, visit your barber. Nothing pulls your look together like a fresh haircut. But this time, change it up by getting something special. Google which styles are in, but more importantly, which style fits you.



2.) Get a MAN-icure

Think manicures are for wimps? Think again. According to surveys, women find men who get their nails done more attractive. It shows that you pay attention to how you present yourself. Neatly trimmed nails and clean cuticles are small details that go a long way.



3.) Tidy those eyebrows

It's been centuries since the caveman's shaggy unibrow was fairly acceptable, so it's about time your eyebrows were shown the extra love they deserve. Well-groomed brows complement the rest of your facial features, making a big difference in your look.



Gillette
Fusion
PROGLIDE



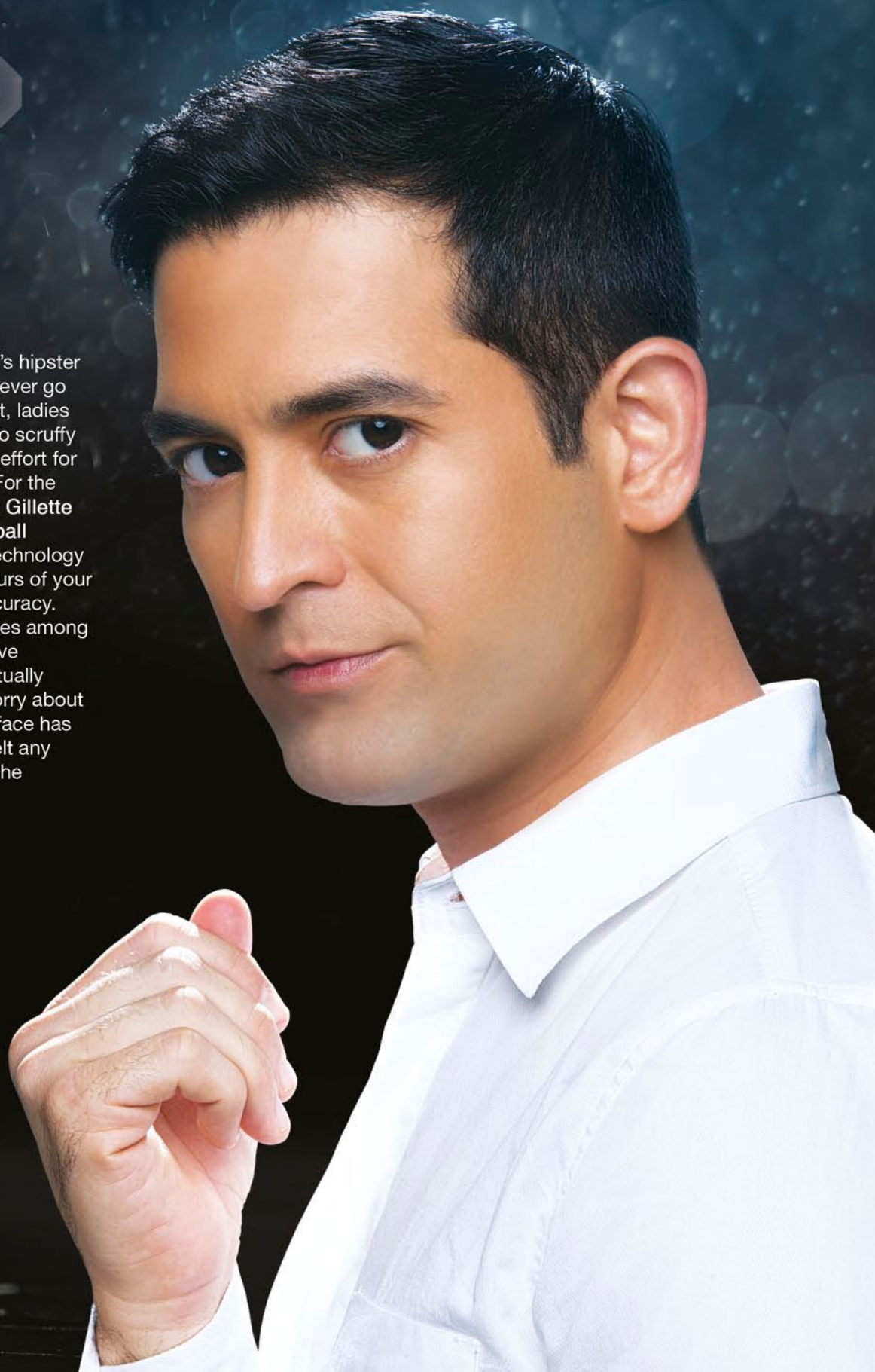
4.) Take care of that face

Work stress can wreak havoc on your skin, making it dry, rough, and dull. A few added steps to your morning regimen will rejuvenate tired skin and make you look like a new man. First, find a good facial scrub to clear your pores. And always remember to moisturize—for softer, smoother skin to go with that dashing smile.



5.) Skip the scruff

Beards might be last month's hipster fad, but a clean shave will never go out of style. And guess what, ladies prefer well-groomed faces to scruffy stubble, so put a little extra effort for your flawless holiday look. For the most suave result, use **New Gillette Fusion ProGlide with Flexball Technology**. The Flexball technology adjusts to the unique contours of your face, ensuring ease and accuracy. Its thinnest, sharpest 5 blades among all Gillette razors help achieve maximum contact to cut virtually every hair, so no need to worry about strays. Your freshly shaven face has never looked this good or felt any better until this stroke with the season's best.

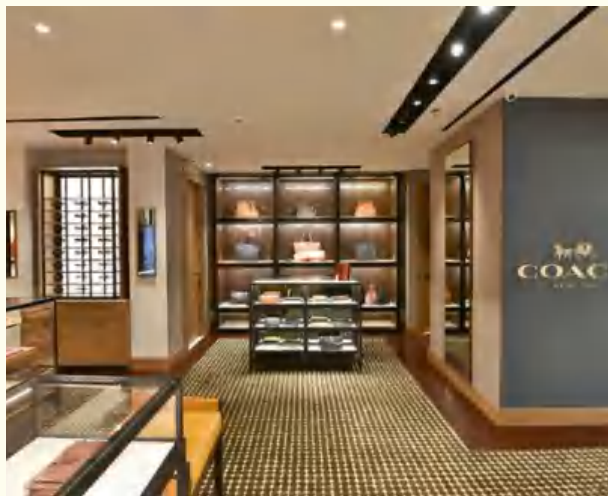


STYLEAGENDA



HEIR APPAREL

Second generation **Charriol** talents Alexandre and Coralie literally brought color to the Swiss luxury house. At the Philippine unveiling, vice president and creative director Alexandre Charriol revealed that the Forever bangle collection now comes in 12 vibrant hues. The brand's signature cables echo a fairytale-meets-rock mood. "There's something for the boardroom or the beach," said Coralie of the Forever Color suite. Charriol is exclusively distributed in the Philippines by Stores Specialists, Inc. Find the Forever Color collection on ssilife.com.ph.



FINALLY HERE

The first **Coach** boutique in the country has opened just in time for the busiest shopping season. The New York design house has interiors designed by no less than Executive Creative Director Stuart Vevers, who partnered with world-renowned creative firm Studio Sofield. The store exudes modern luxury with contrasting textures and luxurious materials. "I believe that the new incarnation of the store will trigger a change in perception of Coach; it is sophisticated and refined yet playful and authentic," said Vevers. Find Coach in Rustan's Shangri-La, or visit www.ssilife.com.ph to view the latest collection.

HAVE YOU MET ANDY?

A good shot of whisky at the end of the day is a tradition enjoyed by men for years. In light of this tradition, it is high time for men all over to meet Andy. **Andy Player** is a new whisky for the new breed of gentlemen. Smooth, bold and full of flavor, Andy Player can be enjoyed by mixing it with cola, citrus soda like Mountain Dew, or even with coffee for a different twist. Or you can choose to take it straight on the rocks. If you haven't met Andy yet, it's high time you did. Share your Andy experience with the hashtag #HaveYouMetAndy and visit HaveYouMetAndy.com.



PARTNERS IN GRIME



Acne is the one villain even the most super of men haven't defeated. But **Clinique** has unleashed a dynamic breakout-fighting duo that could prove to be the kryptonite of skin imperfections. The first is a gentle yet effective cleanser to rid skin of acne-causing bacteria, dirt, oil, and impurities. The second is a tool with specially designed bristles that provide gentle yet more effective cleansing compared to hand washing alone. And when they team up, skin instantly looks and feels fresh, clean, and purified.

Style

DECEMBER 2015
/ JANUARY 2016



WHERE ARE WE?
Time and place are expressed in vivid colors by the Louis Vuitton Escale Worldtime watch.

AHEAD OF ITS TIME

A workshop in Geneva encourages the greatest of watchmakers, concept creators, and designers to think outside the box.

BY KARA ORTIGA

All the trades and talent linked to high-end watchmaking converge in La Fabrique du Temps Louis Vuitton, the facility that aims to master all the secrets of quality watchmaking, while also dreaming up totally inventive techniques. Built on 4,000 square meters of land and bathed in optimal light, La Fabrique du Temps is equipped with both state-of-the-art technologies as well as traditional tools, because the workshop leaves room for man to give every watch a personal touch.

“Imagining tomorrow, inventing the future” are its values, and its master watchmakers have been given free rein over all creative thought. Every radical concept moves toward innovation, believing that the most vibrant realities

are achieved by imagining something completely new at every step without compromise—an example of which is the Louis Vuitton Escale Worldtime watch.

Inspired by the time when luxury liners crossed oceans and passengers lugged around LV steamer trunks with hand-painted initials, crests, and emblems, Louis Vuitton created the Escale with a color palette of planetary proportions meticulously hand painted onto its face. The watch has become a symbol of wanderlust because of its colorful dial that gives you the time of any place in the world in the blink of an eye. What’s more amazing is that the Escale does this without the ticking of the watch hand. Using exclusive technology created by the workshop, the “worldtime” feature

tells time in 24 different time zones using three mobile discs (city, hour, minute) that are layered onto each other.

For its sixth edition, Louis Vuitton collaborates with designer Paul Pettavino, who plays with Escale’s colored squares to create a pattern that resembles a dance floor (The watch’s catchphrase is “the world is a dance floor,” and when you’ve got the world strapped around your wrist, why not match it with a boogie?). The new model is also set apart from previous releases with its blue alligator strap with yellow calfskin lining and the mini Damier Graphite trunk that it comes in.

This watch is an out-of-this-world idea made real by the minds of La Fabrique du Temps Louis Vuitton. **EW**
Greenbelt 4.



AIR TIME
For the times you find yourself in the cockpit of an airplane: The Oris Big Crown ProPilot Altimeter shows the current altitude via a yellow indicator and the corresponding air pressure via a red indicator.

LIKE CLOCKWORK

Your next watch is a back-to-basics piece that defies all expectations of what's modern.

BY MANICA TIGLAO

Founded in 1904, Oris is one of but a few Swiss watchmakers that produces only mechanical watches, and it currently faces a conundrum that many other brands do: Is it wiser to level with the competition or swim against the tide? In a world of smartphones and smartwatches, does it do a brand good to stick to its guns rather than go with the flow? Only time will tell.

So far, however, Oris has had history on its side. In the '70s and '80s, when Swiss watchmakers were confronted with a similar threat with the influx of quartz technology—a period the watch industry likes to call the Quartz Revolution or the Quartz Crisis—Oris, already a major player in Swiss watchmaking, refused to halt production, even as its peers struggled to keep afloat. Today, as the smartwatch is made to appeal to even the haughtiest of watch snobs, and as technological innovation continues to flourish to ever more impressive heights, it might be considered that this is the second coming of the Quartz Crisis.

But while staying relevant in an ever-shifting world is key, Oris remains adamant about continuing to make only

watches with a mechanical movement, instead of joining the smartwatch category. Says David Weber, the regional manager for Oris in the Asia Pacific region, "Our expertise, knowledge, and passion is with mechanical watches. This is what we know, and this is what we're good at." Having crafted mechanical watches for over 111 years, this is a brand that knows where its strengths lie. "Our mechanical watches have functions that are made for daily use, not to be hidden in a safe," Weber offers. "The Oris wearer looks for genuine values, [typically] uses tools and instruments in his or her daily life, and is price-conscious, but willing to spend for luxury goods."

Based in Holstein, Switzerland, the company's headquarters is located in a small, picturesque Swiss village with a bakery and a school in its vicinity. There's a charm to its desire to remain true to its roots of artisan craftsmanship, but it's worthy to note that Oris also exerts efforts to innovate. Every piece, movement, and component of a watch is manufactured according to specification, and the brand's quality control department checks thoroughly to ensure that a

watch complies with Swiss watchmaking standards.

With four main collections featuring collaborations with high-profile entities such as the United States Marines and the automobile brand Audi Sport (Oris is the official partner of the Audi Sport racing teams), the brand creates functional, collectible pieces for both the regular wearer and the watch enthusiast.

"Everything starts with ideas that we collect from our ambassadors," explains Weber. "We then start evaluating the possibilities, always keeping in mind our belief in useful functions that make sense." The brand's Aviation watches, which now include the iconic Big Crown collection, took into consideration the suggestion of pilots who found the original Aviation models' crowns too small for quick and hassle-free time adjustment.

Oris' other pieces are designed for the wearer's convenience: the latest Aquis Depth Gauge, a mechanical diving watch for pro divers, incorporates a depth indicator, while the ProPilot Altimeter, a mechanical aviator timepiece, contains an altitude indicator. Another line, the Force Recon, was crafted especially for the U.S. Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance, an elite U.S. Special Forces command unit. "The competitive environment and a commitment to quality and success have always resonated with our brand," Weber says. The high-performance, state-of-the-art wristwatch is designed to withstand demanding conditions and puts on display the watchmaker's ability to innovate.

The smartwatch may match—or perhaps even surpass, in some cases—the level of accuracy and convenience offered by the mechanical watch, but there's still much to be said about the intricacy and craftsmanship of Swiss-made mechanical timepieces. "[They are] a thing of beauty forever," Weber says proudly. *Power Plant Mall.*



COMFY IN CANVAS

Soludos, the brand responsible for making the espadrille a must-have beach-to-sidewalk shoe, unveils its Fall/Winter 2015 collection. Their latest incarnations look to the desert for inspiration, taking cues from classic Navajo prints, Ikat patterns, and the Native American moccasin. Aside from embroidered canvas, the collection also carries leather and suede models, with each style evoking a distinct Southwestern American flair. Soludos is located at Trinoma, Greenbelt 3, and Glorietta 2.



HIGHER CALIBRE

Oris is back and better than ever. For the first time in 35 years, the Swiss watchmaker is developing movements from the ground up. Oris expanded its movement production capacity with the launch of the Calibre 111. The new model is an evolution of the Calibre 110—a limited edition timepiece released during their 110th anniversary. The major difference between the Calibre 110 and Calibre 111 is the addition of a date function. The piece's 10-day power reserve and non-linear power reserve indicator marks the next phase in Oris' rebirth as a movement innovator.

THE SCIENTIST



Galileo Galilei had a hand in revolutionizing the history of time measurement. To pay tribute to the Tuscan scientist's genius, watchmaker **Panerai** created the Lo Scienziato collection. Its latest addition is the Radomir 1940 Tourbillon in rose gold. The timepiece has a remarkable skeletonized aesthetic, an imposing 48mm diameter, and a power reserve of six days. Only 30 of these watches exist.

WET WEATHER FRIENDS



Top-Siders can finally come out to play in puddles. Classic sailor-shoe maker, **Sperry** collaborated with Danish outerwear company **Rains** to create a fully water-repellent shoe. The treasured silhouette now comes in leather and matte finishes with python print on the uppers and bungee laces. Touched with signal orange soles and traditional hardware fittings to equip those who believe the best stories are written with their feet.



CATCH UP
The souped-up Asics MetaRun (distributed in the Philippines by Sonia Trading) answers every runner's needs: less weight, more cushioning, greater stability and best fit.

GO THE DISTANCE

Asics unlocks the secrets to the best distance running shoe.

BY KARA ORTIGA

For three years, scientists at Kobe, Japan have been wracking their brains to come up with the best long-distance running shoe man has ever seen. They were tasked to create a shoe that answered every runner's needs: that it be lightweight, stable, fits well, and offers the best cushioning. The researchers were given no deadlines and no limit in costs, so the result, you'd imagine, was expected to be the best. So the geniuses at the Asics Institute of Sports Science took their time, doing countless experiments and research work with materials made from scratch.

But creating a shoe that can optimize all requirements is no easy task. Improving one aspect of a shoe usually compromises the other, so the method for creating the new running shoe was really like a puzzle: How do you reduce weight without affecting stability—as both features are necessary for an optimal running shoe? But three years later, eureka! The research team cracked the code, and is now sharing it with the world.

The new Asics MetaRun has every

right to thump its chest. With four patents and five new technologies, this is a shoe that was designed, from the ground up, to be the best performance shoe. No other pair will feel the same way.


The newly patented FlyteFoam, Asic's lightest and most durable midsole, will impress you. It's 55 percent lighter than the industry average and built for high-level cushioning so that, while the shoe is light on the feet, it remains durable over long distances. Another invention is AdaptTruss. The stability system works with your pronation and, together with the Sloped DUOMAX midsole, reduces pressure in your stride so that you have a smoother motion when you run.

Metarun fits like a glove because of the Jacquard Mesh and MetaClutch heel, which creates a sock-like fit and wraps at the anklebone comfortably. No uneasy friction burns—just a nice snug fit. You'll also notice the cushion on the balls of your feet. The X-GEL hybrid tech is built into more precise points in the soles of the shoe to create cushion-

ing where you need it most (or where it usually hurts).

Compared to the Tabi, the first marathon shoe of Japan that was developed over 60 years ago, the MetaRun is a breakthrough in innovation toward the future of performance shoes. If your old rubber shoes feel like a shoddy mattress protecting your feet from the rough pavement, the MetaRun feels like a luxurious spring bed. Even the first fitting is a pleasant surprise. It's fantastic. Your feet will still get tired after a long day of walking in the MetaRun, but they won't feel exhausted to bits or worn out.

Also know that this is a shoe that was designed to become even better the longer you use it, so you will only really feel the difference when you go out for long-distance runs. That's what it is meant to do.

Only 60,000 pairs will be sent worldwide, with 3,300 destined for Asia. It's a limited-edition shoe with the most advanced technologies for running. Reward yourself. 

Bonifacio High Street and Trinoma.



SLAP ON A WRISTWATCH

Sure your phone shows you the time, but it doesn't flash much of your style. A wristwatch, on the other hand, says something about who you are. It lets you sport a distinct style. The F-80 collection from **Salvatore Ferragamo** punctuates your outfit for when you want to sport swag and a bit of shimmer. The F-80 has an analog display with striking elegant dials complemented by gold IP treatment or stainless steel case. Available in all Meridian shops at Glorietta 4 and Newport, Segnateempo in Greenbelt 3, and department stores of Rustan's and SM Makati.



HARBORING COOL

Sydneysider style is sailing into the shores of Manila with laid-back threads from **Marqui**. The designs feature nifty nautical details that capture the urban and resort lifestyles of Sydney and Manila. Founded by Filipino-Australian Ian Capito, each piece is made with fabric durable for everyday wear. Its debut collection will be launched just in time for the holidays. Check out Marqui styles on facebook.com/shopmarqui, and via [@shopmarqui](https://instagram.com/shopmarqui) on Instagram. Exclusively sold online at www.shopmarqui.com.



ALL-SEASON ALL STAR

Sneaker styles come and go but the **Converse** Chuck Taylor All Star has weathered seasons and storms that have washed away many a shoe silhouette. This fall, the timeless classic—worn by everyone from festival-frolicking teens to suit-donning executives on their downtime—is giving a whole new meaning to “rubber shoe”. The Chuck Taylor All Star Rubber sneaker is a cooler, more laid-back alternative to clunky, old-fashioned wellingtons. It easily repels water with a fully rubberized sole and upper, waxed laces, and a gusseted tongue that prevents squishy socks. Available in four new colorways of two-toned uppers: Converse Black, Gloom Green, Thunder Grey and Casino Red.

AND ACTION!



With over 165 years of engineering fine, hand-crafted optic tools, **Leica** is showing no signs of slowing down. The Leica S (Typ 007) is its fastest medium-format camera yet. It's outfitted with a more precise autofocus system that accurately tracks dynamic subjects, Leica's Maestro II processor, and a 37.5-megapixel sensor that's bigger than other full-frame DSLRs. Its outstanding technical features set entirely new standards for action-packed medium-format photography.



KEEP GOING

Driving shoes can also accompany you on an existential journey while being on an actual journey. At least that's what Salvatore Ferragamo projects in a series of videos featuring SoundCloud founder Alexander Ljung, racecar driver Mathias Lauda, and photographer Johannes Huebl.

While these men muse about their hard-won successes, they are wearing Ferragamo's made-to-order drivers, which see over a thousand combinations of body, sole, and that iconic Gancio hardware. Observe, too, its soles with square islands instead of nubs. These are more suitable (read: durable) for conquering the roads of your perfect getaway.

Greenbelt 4.



BEYOND THE PEDAL

Expect only unhurried journeys in a pair of driving shoes.

Why, you ask, would you need a driving shoe when, if you are looking for footwear in the similar slip-on style, the loafer is perfectly fine? Well, it is precisely because you are on a drive, specifically a very long drive, say, from the heart of the city all the way to a mountain escape, that you need a shoe purposely built for the task.

The thinner sole of the driving shoe allows you to accurately judge the amount of pressure needed when stepping on the gas, brake, or clutch. And those little round nubs, which run from the sole right up to the back of the heel, improve traction, preventing your feet from slipping on the pedal or mat, an annoyance that can become critical when, for instance, your foot shifts during a sudden turn. Also, and maybe most important, the construction, softer and more supple, makes the shoe comfortable to wear amid all that pumping and shifting and driving, which is really enough of a reason to get one (just imagine a stop-and-go

drive in a bulky leather boot).

It was the Italian industrialist, Gianni Agnelli, who helped popularize the driving shoe when, in one of his many moments of breaking the rules of style, he paired a suit with the casual footwear. There was no pooh-poohing the Fiat titan's choice because, well, he was the Fiat titan and the combination actually worked: The loucheness of the driving shoe complemented the soft tailoring of Italian suits and, when paired together, it only amplified that elusive attitude of *sprezzatura*.

With the influence of Agnelli and the availability of the style from shoemakers like Giulio Miserocchi (who reportedly created the very first), The Car Shoe Company (who secured the original patent), and Tod's (who popularized the style even more with the introduction of its 133-pebbled Gommino), the driving shoe made the leap from an item reserved for the one-percenter (who else would fork over many, many shekels for

CONTINUED ►

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DOG'S BARKING

Your drooling Labrador can now get in on the action. Dots of Life by Tod's, the visual treatise on the driving shoe lifestyle, adds a new category for you, your favorite Gommino, and your pet. Some entries on the online feed: a Pug mugging by the sea, a kitten popping out of a shoebox, and... is that a puppy chomping on a shoe? Even fantastic beasts are welcome. We spy an iguana sunning its striped hide beside a Gommino in bright orange suede.

Greenbelt 4.



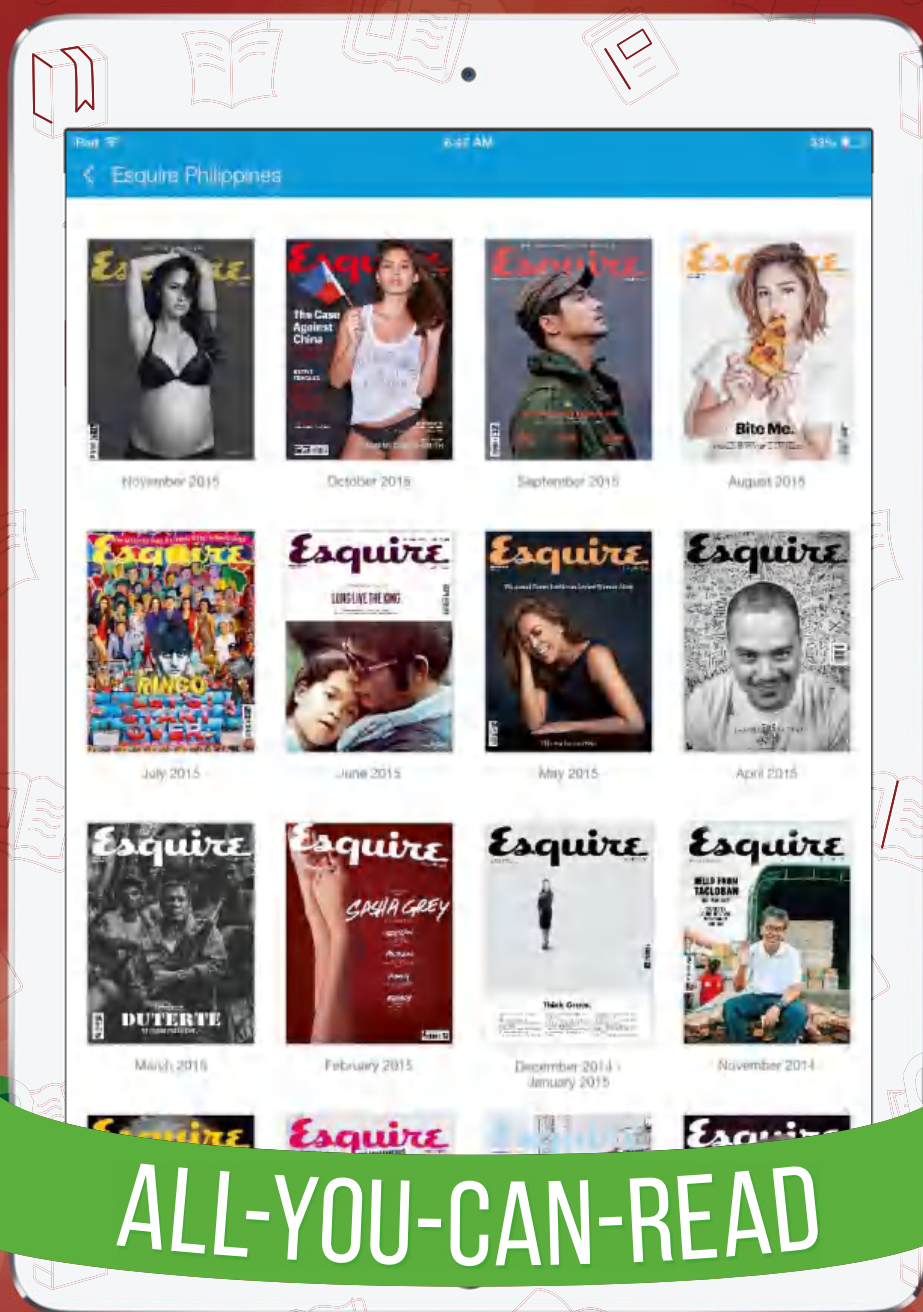
COLOR POPPING

Don't count out the French: House Louis Vuitton marks the 10th anniversary of its Monte Carlo driving moccasins with an explosion of colors. The brown waxed alligator and black patent versions are definitely standouts, but consider a dusty blue in textured calf leather. Pack this on a sun-and-sea holiday.

Greenbelt 4.



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MADE WELL

A tiny workshop in Marikina makes shoes to your preference and to your measure.

BY CLIFFORD OLANDAY

The six-person team of Black Wing Shoes is crammed into a small space cut within the confines of a rubber factory. The shoemakers are arranged around the room, their worktables set against the four walls, the shoes in their hands in different stages of production, from assembly to stitching to lining to lasting. There is a wall of shelves stocked with leathers that look like thin tongues of different colors. And here is a shoe in the making, a pair of cap-toe oxfords, resplendent in its inky darkness and the classic form that it is slowly taking on.

Production works like clockwork: Shoes go 'round and 'round, from one set of hands to another and another, until it is done and all that is left to do is for the client to pick them up and put them on. But right now, there is a problem. There is a backlog in production

because not only is the less-than-two-year-old company a small outfit, but also there is growing number of men who want their own pair of custom-made oxfords, penny loafers, desert boots, and more.

The attraction is understandable. You'd willingly travel all the way to the Marikina workshop for shoes that are made to your preference and, more important, to your measure.

"It's built for you," affirms Black Wing founder Buddy Tan. Picture this: You walk down the street and see another fellow with the same shoes—but why does his pair look better than yours? To put it bluntly, it's because your feet are fat. You may be flat-footed and so, to accommodate your wide feet, you go a size up when buying shoes. A bigger size, of course, means longer dimensions, which in turn make the fit

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Oxford? Brogue? Cap-toe? All of the above? The options are almost limitless for made-to-measure shoes from Black Wing Shoes in Marikina.

of your shoe look a little awkward. "With made-to-measure, the dimensions are correct," he points out. "We'll take into account your proportions, and we'll ensure when you fit the pair, you feel that it's really for you."

Buddy's office is an even smaller space on the adjacent lot. White boxes that hold the promise of finished shoes are stacked on several corners. A table is covered in discs of wax and pots of paints plus a dirty yellow sponge. Two men arrive for their appointment (It is hard to secure one, by the way. There are no more slots for this year). He gets to work, tracing the shape of each foot on a sheet of paper and taking six measurements, from the toe box to the ankle and everything in between, with a tape measure.

The data is then transformed into a shoe last. And here, in the creation of the physical rendering of a client's foot, is where the ingenuity of Black Wing comes in. Bespoke requires crafting a new last for each customer, while ready-to-wear makes do with lasts that are available in the market. Black Wing lies somewhere in between. Their *sapateros* pads a basic shoe last with scraps of leather or rubber and then, using a sander, sculpts it according to the exact dimensions of the client's foot. This method makes the entire process easier (no need to build a last from scratch) and, more important, pushes costs way down. The biggest draw of Black Wing might be the price, which start at P3,500, a shadow of what custom-made shoes go for.

As for the styles, they are almost limitless. "As long as we can craft it by hand..." goes Buddy. But once clients find out that they can really get what they want like, say, a pair of longwing brogues in navy and gray with violet accents and a blue sole, it confuses them. The possibilities—Double or single monk strap? Round or chiseled toe? Oxblood or chestnut **CONTINUED** ▶

CONTINUED ▶

brown?—can be overwhelming, so much so that the next time Buddy hears from some clients is three months later.

Of course, you can always come in with a picture that the workshop can use as a starting point. From out of a cardboard shoebox comes a black monk strap that was patterned after a Berluti and here on the table is a derby that mimics the heft of a Prada.

Another option is to transmit all your ideas to Buddy, who will then design the shoe of your dreams from scratch. He has probably created over a hundred styles, he says, including a mini-version of a double monk for a very lucky kid and, on rare occasions, footwear for ladies (Buddy says he can't design women's shoes, but an elegant two-tone kiltie says otherwise).

Black Wing is more than just a local source for custom-made shoes. Buddy holds a degree in political science and, in a previous life, worked for the government, "overthinking" processes and creating systems, which may explain how he set up the company: "We're not gunning for profits. We're gunning for sustainability. This is more of an industry effort rather than a quick buck."

After a two-year break, he took over the family's rubber business and then developed his passion project, a made-to-measure shoe service anchored on

the idea that small can indeed thrive in the world of big business. There is also a matter of pride as a son of Marikina, the shoe capital of the Philippines. For the past decade, big shoe brands have been importing their wares from China because the city couldn't keep up. It goes like this: Every time a super mall opens, local brands need to come up with a large amount of stock to place in the stores of the new mall. "Gibi or Rusty Lopez will tell Marikina shoemakers that they need inventory worth one million pesos," Buddy shares. "Marikina says give us six months. China can do it in two weeks." How do you compete with that?

"We want to make a little bit of a change," he continues. "We're providing an alternative business model for shoemakers by not being slaves to the big brands. You can actually start your own [business.] You just need passion and you need to love what you're doing."

You also need to tweak the system. According to Buddy, the Marikina shoe industry still operates under a piece rate system as in a shoemaker gets paid per pair he completes. "Imagine, a regular *sapatero* gets P50 per pair. For him to make P500, he has to make 10 pairs," he says. "But if you count how much time it takes to make handmade shoes, you'd only be able to make six in an eight-

hour period. Quality would be the first to suffer." Buddy has made it a point to invest in his *sapateros*, paying them in wages, allowances, and even incentives. That's just one example of how the businessman updated local processes so that it works in the current environment. Even before the workshop opened, Buddy spent many months easing out bad practices and re-training his shoemakers.

As for the future, Black Wing is already on its second phase, an off-the-rack line of sneakers with rubber soles akin to Top-Siders. But that's just a part of the bigger picture. Buddy has also set up a community workshop in San Mateo where most of the novice *sapateros* now live. These shoemakers may not be very skilled but "...all of them have drive and a lot of them have needs, and those are the qualities that you need for people to enjoy training." Apart from expanding the business, the real goal of the new line is to train shoemakers so that, when they become sufficiently skilled, they can move to Black Wing's made-to-order operations.

It's a really good plan for the local industry—and you get a great pair of custom-made brogues, boots, or loafers, too. **■**

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ON THE MENU

1. Cap-toe oxford
2. Tassel driving loafer
3. Full brogue
4. Double monk strap chukka
5. Hand-painted whole-cut
6. Balmoral boot
7. Woven derby



Grooming



FACE VALUE

Reboot your skin with these grooming essentials.

BY NICOLE LIMOS



1 SPOT CORRECTOR

You can cure acne, but the dark marks they leave behind are reminders of your former pizza face. Turn to spot lighteners that can work in as quick as a week. Our pick, Neoretin Discrom Control Serum, is a de-pigmenting solution that works on the phases of melanin production, spots, acne scars, and discolorations. Just apply directly on your dark spots at night and watch them fade away.

Available at leading dermatologists nationwide.



3 EYE CREAM

The skin around your eyes is thinner and more sensitive than the rest of your face, so yes, there is a point to using gentler eye creams (versus your regular moisturizer). A favorite, the light and fragrance-free Kiehl's Powerful Wrinkle Reducing Eye Cream, deflates puffiness and infuses moisture. This is eight hours of sleep in a bottle.

Greenbelt 5.



5 SUNSCREEN

We know you hate putting stuff on your face, but give the TiZnO3 Age Defying Fusion Facial Mineral Sunscreen a try. It sets on the skin like skin (this applies as smooth as silk and has a non-greasy, matte finish) or even better as it smoothens complexion and improves skin tone, all while preventing those wrinkles and dark spots you'd otherwise get from sun exposure. Also, this is waterproof.

P1,600, Skin Inc., Makati.



2 MOISTURIZER

News flash: All skin types need moisturizing—even oily skin. But what oily skin doesn't need is a product that contains, well, more oil. Look for moisturizers that are oil-free and non-comedogenic (that means it won't clog up your pores) like the Neostrata Texture Perfecting Cream. Apart from providing non-greasy hydration, the moisturizer shields against environmental damage as well as prevents breakouts, thanks to its AHA concentration.

Available at leading dermatologists nationwide.



4 LIP SCRUB

Flaky lips can be as unpleasant as bad breath, and many times a lip balm isn't enough of a solution. The Sara Happ Brown Sugar Lip Scrub is an effective way of exfoliating your lips. Just dab a generous amount over your puckers and scrub dead skin away. No rinsing required—just wipe off with tissue. The exfoliating sugar crystals are mixed with essential oils that soften and smoothen skin, too. Do this every other night.

P1,450, Beauty Bar.



6 MASK

Slathering on a treatment mask seems like something only your girlfriend would do but, with the benefits of this powerful anti-aging product, you will not care about the stereotype. The Perricone Chloro Plasma Mask has bursts of chlorophyll—yes, the same stuff that makes plants green—which, when applied over the skin, deeply detoxifies, smoothen lines, and shrink pores. Just massage over the face and watch the gel texture turn into clay. Rinse thoroughly after it dries.

Rustan's Makati.

Wouldn't you love to see these under your Christmas tree?



Available in bookstores, convenience stores, and on newsstands nationwide.



Permanent Vacation

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING IDLE IS DOING NOTHING AT ALL.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAIRA LUNA
STYLING BY CLIFFORD OLANDAY





Lazy Sunday (or Monday)

Short-sleeve shirt (P18,250) by Van Laack, **pants** (P12,250) by Hitl at Van Laack, **shoes** (P6,995) by Castañer at Myth, and **sunglasses** by Louis Vuitton.



Solo Day

Coat and **sweater**, both by Nautica, **hat** (P3,495)
by Bailey at Myth, and **bags** by Louis Vuitton.



Don't Wake Me Up

Shirt (P14,800) by Van Laack and drawstring pants (P7,250) by Polo Ralph Lauren.



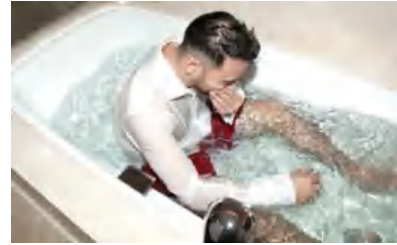
Leave a Message at the Tone
Sweater by Nautica and watch by Tag Heuer.



I Can... But I Won't

Cardigan (P24,500) and **turtleneck** (P33,500), both by Ralph Lauren, **shoes** (P7,395) by Castañer at Myth, and **watch** by Tag Heuer.





Goodbye to All That

Shirt by T.M. Lewin and
sunglasses by Louis Vuitton.



I Wanna Be Sedated

Suit by Paul Smith, **T-shirt** by Nautica, and
shoes (P6,995) by Castañer at Myth.

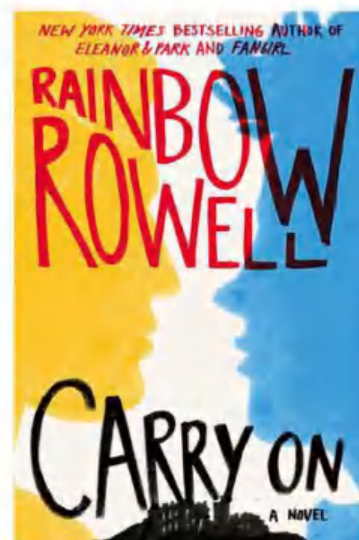
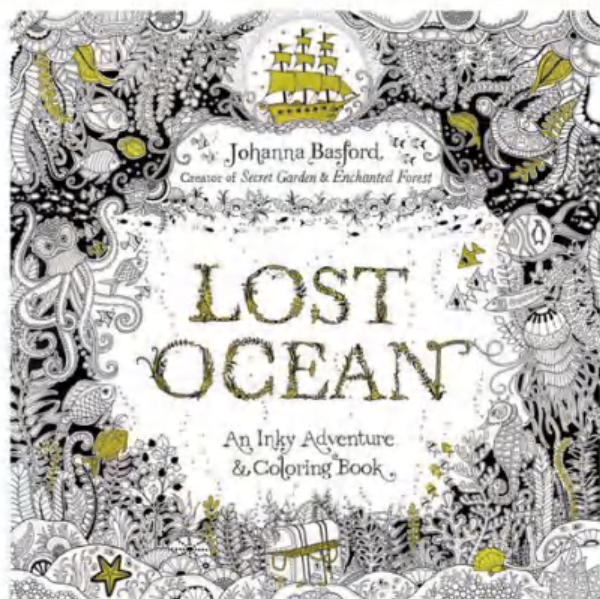
Give Me Some Sunshine

Suit by Van Laack, **sweater** (P11,000) by Polo Ralph Lauren, and **shirt** by Paul Smith.



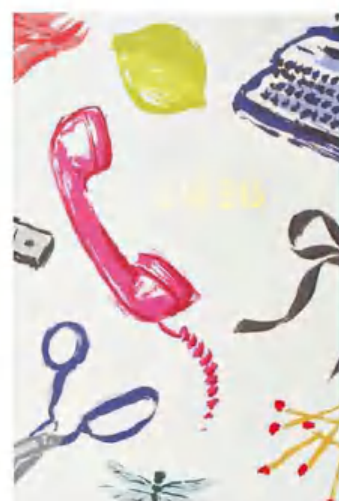
MODEL **BRYCE SALHAB** GROOMING **MURIEL VEGA PEREZ** FOR LIFESTYLE SALON BY
LOUIS PHILIPP KEE GROOMING ASSISTANTS **JOAN TEOTICO** AND **LAWRENCE LAURIO**
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DECEMBER 2015 - JANUARY 2016

NOTES & ESSAYS

LAUREL FANTAUZZO
ON COMMUNITIES
VANNI DE SEQUERA
ON COMMODITIES

ARTWORK BY ALLAN BALISI
IMAGES COURTESY OF BLANC GALLERY

NOTES & ESSAYS

I. QUESTIONING TITO TONY

In May 2015, Antonio Meloto joked about the benefits of cappuccino children for the Philippines. Here, a Filipina-American cappuccino responds.

LAUREL FANTAUZZO

In my mid-20s, I traveled to Manila for a language immersion program, Tagalog On Site. I have a Filipina mom who never taught me Tagalog and a white American dad who never learned. As part of my education in 2007, I visited an Aeta village in Sapang Bato, Pampanga. That's where I first learned about Gawad Kalinga.

My Fil-Am classmates and I tried out our awkward Tagalog with the village elders in a small cement church. The land was called Sitio Target because the Americans used the area for war games during World War II. In 2005, the Clark Corporation, the group now administering the former American air base, commissioned a local NGO to build housing for the Aeta community.

The Aeta leaders told us they were not consulted about this housing. Their homes are made of nipa leaves and walls of bamboo, according to Aeta customs. But the NGO had replaced several of these Aeta homes with tiny units built of cement walls and tin roofs.

"What happens if you don't want to live in these houses?" I asked one of the leaders. "Can't you just say no?"

One man in his late 20s shook his head. I'll call him Pastor. Our teacher, Susan Quimpo, translated Pastor for me: "In the area where Gawad Kalinga built, they tore the old nipa houses down. They didn't listen to the villagers."

Pastor said their community met Antonio Meloto only once, in 2005. He came with some light-skinned foreigners, made a speech, and shook some hands.

I know how Mr. Meloto started the multi-billion-peso house-building NGO, Gawad Kalinga, in a low-income neighborhood of Cavite in the mid '90s; how he flies around the world now, soliciting millions of dollars in donations; how his employees call him Tito Tony, a patriarchal honorific.

I haven't been to every one of Gawad Kalinga's 20,000 homes in the Philippines. I'm assuming not all of them were like Sitio Target's. But I remembered Sitio Target on May 24, 2015, when the University of Hawaii's Center for Philippine studies denounced what Mr. Meloto said at their annual fiesta:

"His belief that the greatest asset of the Philippines is our beautiful women, and that the future of our nations can be advanced by using them to attract the 'best and the brightest' men from the West and enticing them to invest in the Philippines, was outrageously sexist and deeply offensive to everybody in the audience, as well as patronizing and disrespectful to Filipino women in particular. Equally offensive, Mr. Meloto went on to share his views on the need for Filipino women and their white husbands to produce what Mr. Meloto (apparently humorously) called 'cappuccinos' and appeared to present such a policy of seduction and reproduction as a solution to the problems of economic development in the Philippines."

The letter ignited a firestorm of Facebook fights. But Mr. Meloto's sentiments were not new. In 2010, Meloto wrote for *Global Balita*:

"The image of the Global Filipino is taking shape and form in America, individually and collectively—showing the best of our breed. From personal experience, many second and third generation Filipino Americans are competitive, competent, and socially connected and curious about their Filipino roots. Superior lineage is emerging in new stock that is searching for its original cultural gene pool."

My racial ingredients make me a cappuccino. I could perhaps enjoy Mr. Meloto's theory that (the milk of) my American-ness, mixed with (the coffee of) my Filipino-ness, makes my lineage "superior." Instead, I have the urge to interrupt Mr. Meloto's remarks: Tito Tony, please stop.

Mr. Meloto defended himself against the UH's criticism in 2015.

"I spoke candidly about bright foreigners finding the Philippines as the land of opportunity, hub for social entrepreneurs, and the most beautiful country in Asia, including our women. I cited two of my daughters who married foreigners, a Brit and a Fil-Am, who were volunteers in GK and left their countries to live in the Philippines. It would be ridiculous for a father like me to trivialize and insult my



Above: *Splashed Softly Against The Wall And Kiss Them With Love*, 2015

daughters, whom I love and respect, to lure foreigners to our country.”

But if Mr. Meloto believes even jokingly that lighter-skinned cappuccino children are the future of the Philippines, what is his parallel belief about the darker-skinned indigenous peoples who originate from the Philippines’ past?

I interviewed Dr. Faith Kares soon after Mr. Meloto’s remarks tore across the transnational Internet. She began studying GK as an anthropology scholar in 2007. “The language interested me first,” Dr. Kares, 34, told me in May 2015. “The language, the discourse, the way they’ve been able to frame housing development as more than just housing. They say, ‘We’re building a nation.’”

Dr. Kares spent nearly a decade researching GK. Her dissertation, “Packaging Care, Regulating Poverty: NGOs and New Modes of Neoliberal Governance,” focuses on GK’s efforts in Metro Manila, its advertising abroad, and its effects on the communities it enters.

Kares is also a cappuccino child whose

single Filipina mother raised her in Chicago.

“He was very kind,” she said of Mr. Meloto. “I believe that he genuinely believes that what he’s doing is a good thing. But in critical NGO studies, this is what we see. One can have good intentions, but how it’s actually executed and how it plays out is a different thing. The sentiments conveyed in Meloto’s speech are no anomaly; rather, this language is fundamental to Gawad Kalinga’s development discourse.”

I returned to the Aeta community a second time in June 2015. I was curious to see how GK’s project had endured 10 years later. This time, *Esquire* editor Kara Ortega accompanied me as translator in Pampanga.

We paused at one tiny GK house where a dark-skinned, curly-haired woman was carrying her infant while she hung laundry on a clothesline. We felt a blast of heat from within the doorway; the metal roof seemed to cook the concrete from within.

“Are you missionaries?” the young mother asked. We said no, and held up our magazines. “Ah, researchers,” she said, and beckoned us to follow her. I noticed that

the village was more crowded with concrete structures now. In 2007, there had been more grass and trees.

The young mother stopped at a bigger house in the center of the village and called out a name. A man in his 30s emerged, wearing denim shorts and carrying a *bolo*. It was the man I called Pastor from my first meeting with the Aeta in 2007. He invited us to sit inside, at a kitchen table.

Unlike the Gawad Kalinga homes, this home was cool and expansive, with electricity and running water. Six other Aeta members of the community, all women, gathered around the table with us. “We’re writing about Gawad Kalinga,” Kara said in Tagalog, “and we wanted to get your point of view.”

Pastor’s face tightened. “*Ayoko ang GK*,” he said. I don’t like GK. The Aeta women laughed with agreement.

“*Bakit?*” Kara asked Pastor. Why?

Pastor explained. When Gawad Kalinga entered with foreigners, cameras, and speeches in 2005, they began building houses without consulting with the villag-



ers. GK also required that Aeta residents clear trees. This requirement caused the most disputes within Sitio Target. Trees were the life of the village, providing shade, fruit, and flood protection. Half the villagers didn't want to participate. But a few dozen residents did help GK. Pastor reasoned that these villagers didn't want to turn away any assistance, since they were low-income farmers who sold vegetables and trinkets. The young mother with her own GK house agreed; she didn't want to turn away charity. It was risky to tell the

outsiders no.

Pastor said GK built the homes without planning for a canal. Now, with rain, floods rise waist-deep. "It's like Manila now," the young mother said.

Pastor nodded. He said, "*Gusto naming simpleng buhay lang. Kubo. Hayop, nakatikim ka ng gulay. May buhay sa mga puno.*" We just want a simple life. A bamboo house. Raising animals. Eating vegetables. There is life in the trees.

I took out my notepad and wrote the sentences down. Pastor eyed me. "We don't

want trouble with GK," he said in Tagalog.

"Can we use your stories?" Kara asked. "Without identifying you?"

Pastor nodded his assent. I put my notebook and pen away. He relaxed.

"What does your community need the most, if not houses?" I asked.

"Bolos," Pastor said. "Kalabaw." Water buffaloes and machetes. They needed irrigation for their homes and crops, instead of pumps. Their young ones needed help getting to the nearest high school, a two-hour walk each way. Often they dropped out, too



Above: *Leaving Stones Unturned*, 2015

tired and hungry to make the journey.

I wondered: on Mr. Meloto's caffeinated, racial taxonomy, what would the Aeta be? *Tsokolate*? Black coffee?

I asked Kara to translate a question. "How does it feel to be Aeta when you're around non-Aeta people? Do you think some outsiders discriminate against you?"

The entire table erupted, from grandmother to the youngest woman.

"They think just because we're *kulot* that we have nothing in our head," the young mother said.

"The world is for *unat*," a middle-aged woman said. The grandmother agreed. "No one hires the *kulot*."

Their world was divided. A limited existence for their own, dark-skinned, kinky-haired community—the *kulot*—and a richer, more inclusive life for the lighter-skinned, straight-haired outsiders—the *unat*. UP Political Science Professor Alex Magno spoke to CNN about skin-based discrimination in the Philippines in 2012. "We long ago considered the Malayo-Polynesian tribes superior and the Negrito

tribes inferior," Magno said. "Hispanic culture merely reinforced that prejudice with its Eurocentric paradigm. Superimpose Hollywood. The standard of beauty is fair skin, tall, straight nose, straight hair."

After asking permission, we took photos of some GK homes. The Aeta community did what they could, what they'd always done during incursions from outsiders and natural disasters alike. They adapted. They knocked out walls of the tiny houses and pieced together extensions. They hung hammocks outside for when the metal-roofed houses grew too sweltering. They kept their animals close, as they always had, in defiance of GK's declaration that animals were dirty.

Pastor told us he could not remember the exact date of GK's last visit. It had been a long time.

After our visit to Sitio Target, Kara Ortiga and I sent over a dozen inquiries to various members of the current Gawad Kalinga leadership. We have yet to receive an official invitation. We decided to visit GK's offices in Mandaluyong unannounced. There, Paula Nierras of the marketing department agreed to a brief conversation.

We asked Ms. Nierras what the beneficiaries of Gawad Kalinga could do, if they did not agree with the building style of GK homes.

"Usually, hmm—I haven't heard that," Ms. Nierras said. I mentioned disagreements in one community, and she and referred us to "*Kuya Jon*." Jon D. Ramos is the area coordinator for Central Luzon and North Manila. The Sitio Target village in Pampanga was under his purview as of July 2015.

Ms. Nierras continued. "Of course, for the new houses, we do have standards, so we maintain the standards so we make sure that the area is secure. But I think with the maintenance of the houses, the main responsibility is with the homeowners."

Was any there an official policy to handle residents who did not want to live in Gawad Kalinga communities?

"No official policy," Ms. Nierras said. "I think the end goal is for them to be able to realize that at the end of the day, what we really want is for them to feel empowered and for them to have a sense of community."

I wrote to Jon D. Ramos on July 7. He responded within an hour, and I replied immediately, eager to get feedback from the current leadership of GK itself. I asked several questions about Sitio Target, how it had changed since 2005, and whether the Aeta residents had any input regarding the architecture and the needs of their own community.

My inquiry was met with silence. I sent my questions again. More silence.

In the Philippines, where family is paramount, powerful organizations might act like guardians of family secrets; to pry is to be rude. And in an organization like Gawad Kalinga, filled with noble intentions, Tito Tony is the inviolable patriarch. To confront him, to ask him difficult questions, is to be the spoiled young brat, the overeducated, academic outsider disregarding decades of dignified work.

And who hasn't had a beloved uncle make off-color comments at the family meal? Does his loose tongue make him a bad person? If GK made mistakes in one community, does that invalidate their work in the rest of the country?

In his letter to the University of Hawaii, Mr. Meloto was aggrieved that academics had accused him of having a "colonial mentality." He defended himself by reminding readers of his own racial identity: "On the contrary, I have been working for liberation from a colonial mentality by being proud of my being Filipino—and my brown color. I promote world-class Filipino brands and services through social entrepreneurship to create inclusive wealth in the Philippines that does not leave the poor behind."

The plight of cynicism and frustration are familiar to Filipinos who want the country to be better. As Antonio Meloto has repeated, it can be easy to be apathetic. GK's latest operation is *Walang Iwanan*—no one left behind.

It can also be easy to praise an organization for its work, its sincerely held beliefs, and its good intentions. It is perhaps

far more difficult to confront the ways in which a well-intentioned organization may be keeping damaging power structures, and therefore class and racial differences, intact.

This confrontation can be as difficult as facing the daily ways in which we ourselves have created, and continue to create, the conditions of poverty that disturb us so deeply.

Mr. Meloto, this cappuccino child is ready for a conversation whenever you are. My questions remain, and I'll leave this one here for you: Did Gawad Kalinga leave the Aeta villagers of Sitio Target behind?

Additional photos, links, and full transcripts can be viewed at <http://laurelfantauzzo.com/post/134044587044/gkstory>.

LAUREL FANTAUZZO IS A WRITER.

II. SHABU, THE NEVER-ENDING STORY

Cocaine has become our poor man's shabu thanks to attack-dog tactics employed by PDEA.

VANNI DE SEQUERA

Inside the Vienna headquarters of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is predictably monolithic and faceless like all UN edifices, a sizeable team of specialists works throughout the year on the annual World Drug Report. The 2014 version—filled with chemical esoterica, tables, and smart-looking graphs—is a laborious read because of its comprehensive scope and devotion to confusing initialisms.

Each year, however, the World Drug Report can be boiled down to this essence: a whole lot of people in a whole lot of countries are getting high.

The Philippines is mentioned five times in the 2014 report. The first time merely differentiates the country's preference for smoking crystalline methamphetamine from its neighbors' own method of consumption (Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam prefer to pop their meth in pill form). In the second, the report says the Philippines "eradicated" 1,244,738 outdoor cannabis plants in 2012, ranking fifth behind other weedicide nations like Italy, the US, Ukraine, and Tajikistan. The third mention is a generic statement lumping the Philippines with other Asian countries where significant seizures of ephedrine, a methamphetamine precursor, were made (also as of 2012). The fourth reference gets arcane: "In Europe and in Asia, governments have reported seizures of a number of other non-scheduled pre-precursors for phenylacetone or P2P in recent years, in-



cluding benzaldehyde and benzylcyanide. Larger amounts were seized in the Philippines (2,400 litres)...” In the fifth, the Philippines shows up in a table that says a total of 21 hectares of marijuana plantations were, once again, “eradicated.”

Why the government is wasting resources chasing after cannabis growers is a discussion better left for another day. Credit, however reluctantly, must be given to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) for partially fulfilling its stated mandate to be “responsible for efficient law enforcement of all provisions on any dangerous drugs and/or precursors and essential chemicals,” at least in relation to its full-on engagement of the shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) despite limited manpower and equipment. In its 2013 annual report (the most recently released one), PDEA states that it seized shabu worth P4,708,208,857 and 634 grams of ephedrine worth a shade over a billion pesos. (Interestingly, while most of the ephedrine was destroyed as a matter of policy, only a little more than 10 percent of the confiscated shabu was incinerated.)

The haul, nevertheless, gave the agency cause to give itself an awkwardly written pat on the back: “FY 2013 is a banner year for the agency as it accomplished remarkable anti-drug operations that contributed to the successful execution of its mission.” While nearly six billion pesos of shabu and ephedrine does sound impressive, there

are points of concern about the data displayed on the PDEA website.

For that year, the agency had a conviction rate (out of 10,502 cases filed) of only 26 percent, although this may be as much a function of the state of our justice system as it is faulty evidence handling and procedural lapses during arrests. In terms of kilograms, moreover, the total amount of shabu seized in 2013 was just 22 percent of that in 2004. The rising street price of shabu in the Philippines statistically bloated the actual quantity of drugs captured.

Yet this price increase is precisely PDEA’s greatest enforcement victory. In the mid-1990s, one gram of shabu retailed in the streets for less than P500. According to the agency: “At the national account, as of December 2013, shabu is valued at P3,800 to P10,000 per gram... cocaine at P4,600 to P7,000 per gram.” (If you do the math, PDEA itself computes the worth of its seized shabu at P5,800 per gram, although it is unclear if the agency considers this a wholesale or retail figure.) Even after adjusting for inflation, this upswing affords the agency well-deserved bragging rights.

An earlier World Drug Report stated the price of shabu in the Philippines at the wholesale level is the highest in Asia. In short, cocaine has become our poor man’s shabu thanks to attack-dog tactics employed by PDEA.

Law enforcers and drug rehabilitation professionals, nonetheless, do not perceive any significant reduction in the pervasive-

ness of shabu use in the country. The estimates of shabu users as a percentage of the population vary, from 2.1 percent to an astonishingly high 10 percent. Even the lower-end estimate equates to millions of users. PDEA itself admits that “shabu remains the dominant drug of choice among drug abusers in the country... In 2013, 83.97 percent of the arrests involved shabu.”

What is happening here is not as counterintuitive as you might think—a look at the price elasticity of shabu demand can feasibly explain this phenomenon of steady demand for the drug despite sharply rising prices. The demand for a product this directly neurotoxic to dopamine neurons is bound to be inelastic, meaning higher prices will not lead to lower revenues for suppliers. You could say a product so psychoactive is a more necessary purchase than, say, even rice. Addicts, after all, hardly concern themselves with inflation-adjusted pricing and percentage-of-income purchases.

Herein lies the irony of a drug policy that seeks to raise street prices to presumably curb demand, and therefore, eventually reduce supply—it doesn’t work because drug lords end up enjoying even bigger profits anyway. Applying Anti-Money Laundering Council tactics, as well adopting “the UNODC concept of intensifying financial investigations of drug cases to cripple arrested high-value drug personalities and drug groups,” PDEA has frozen or caused to forfeit almost half a billion pesos worth



Above: *I Give Up, It's Okay*, 2015

Above: *Standing Still*, 2015

of assets accumulated via shabu-related activities. This, along with aggressive ground-level enforcement, leads drug syndicates still operating freely to quantify their own risks, passing their added cost to the consumer while knowing their captured market will continue to buy their product no matter what the price. New syndicates, emboldened by the lure of sky-high profits (but unencumbered by a track record in the Philippines that would mean they have been under the watchful eye of PDEA) also swoop in. Is it any wonder then that African crime syndicates and the Mexican-Sinaloa cartel have decided to crash the party of Filipino-Chinese drug lords and join the lottery?

Decriminalizing the shabu trade in the Philippines (and therefore lowering the street price) will never be a political (or moral) option in our lifetime, and locking up thousands of users, peddlers, dealers, and the occasional big fish each year isn't going to cut it, either, because our penal institutions

are already bursting at the seams. There's always the Tito Sotto option of democide; it won't work, though, since the endemic judicial-system crawl will take so long to process the court cases of pushers they will die a natural death anyway (thereby mostly nullifying the desired deterrence). Dealing drugs, above all, is cost-benefit analysis, like everything else. Of course, even if Congress passes the death penalty, too many instances of unjustly punished innocents will lead to a national uproar and a repeal.

The only societal recourse may be to keep the status quo, as woeful as its flawed idealism has proven to be. But maybe it's better to preserve the national conscience than save the bodies and souls of a minority group that many believe deserve their privation in the first place. Each time the Philippine flag is raised at the PDEA headquarters in Quezon City, a cloying hymn is sung "to keep the fervor of serving the country burning in the hearts of every PDEA personnel."

*Ito'y aming pangako bansa'y paglingkuran
Magandang kinabukasan alay sa kabataan
Tayo'y magsama-sama tungo sa tagumpay
Lakas ng PDEA ating iwagayway
Ito'y aming tungkuling alay
Na sa inyo'y ibibigay Buhay ma'y iaalay
kung kailangan
Sa tungkuling aming sinumpaang
Kahusaya't kakayahan tungo sa kaunlaran
Karangala't dedikasyon pamanang iiwan
Halina at kumilos tayo'y magpasya
Bansang ligtas sa droga hangad ng PDEA
Ito'y aming tungkuling alay
Na sa inyo'y ibibigay
Buhay ma'y iaalay kung kailangan
Sa tungkuling aming sinumpaang*

Imagine these men and women lip-syncing, limply, to their futile musical battle cry, knowing each time they waded into the frontline, it's just another day the war on drugs, as presently waged, cannot be won.

VANNI DE SEQUERA IS A WRITER.

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"OLED TV:
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HOW TO FIX THE PHILIPPINES:

RADICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

We trust that many of our readers are also readers of other fine publications, and that many of you will remember that a broadsheet called *Today* once graced the country's newsstands, at a time when newsstands still mattered in the flow of mainstream information. From the early '90s to the mid-oughts, the newspaper delivered more than its lifetime could carry in wit and style, thanks to an erudite publisher and editor, and a bustling bullpen of opinion-makers and columnists.

ART BY ISABEL SANTOS

Today also carried more cutting satire than the Filipino could perhaps bear, or bear to understand; many have said that we, after all, often prefer to rely on humor and indirectness on one end of our national temperament, and on knee-jerk protestations and tantrums on the other.

But if there is one thing newspapers and periodicals (this magazine included) have always captured and appealed to, it is that fleeting roadside-variety attention that Filipinos possess. Perhaps this is what good, solid opinion writing—radical suggestions and outrageous propositions included—is supposed to do: to hold the reader's imagination and harden their emotion long enough, as well as defy the most ephemeral attachment to the lingering problems and issues of our day. — **SARGE LACUESTA**

THE FILIPINO POOR—A MISMANAGED RESOURCE

BY RAMIL DIGAL GULLE

STYLE WRITER

Please feel free to share this message on social media but only to your like-minded and non-poor friends.

It's been a great puzzle through millennia:

of all the Thou shalt and Thou shalt not in the Judeo-Christian moral framework, why is there no “Thou shalt not be poor”? And even Jesus Christ, in admonishing his followers when they tried to stop a woman from washing his feet and hair with expensive perfume, said, “The poor will always be with you.”

It's almost as if God and His Son knew that poverty was not really a choice. Maybe it's inevitable in a world where empires—whether Roman, American, or Chinese—simply have to prop up the ruling class on the backs of the throng who through generations have passed on poverty like a genetic heritage. Or a disease.

But going back to choice and the state of being poor: Every single book on financial literacy and on how to get rich makes it sound as though poverty is, indeed, something we choose. Poverty follows physics like everything else—cause and effect. You make one set of decisions, you get rich. You make another set of decisions, you stay (or become) poor.

Very few people would consciously choose to be poor. Yet, in the case of generational poverty, being poor seems to have been chosen for certain families. If your grandparents and parents are poor, it is very likely that you will be poor as well. Not simply because your family has lacked resources—but more because none of your recent forebears knew how to get rich. They knew how to survive while being poor and that's the knowledge they passed on to you—and you will most likely get by on that skill set.

Poverty would not be such a problem if it weren't so widespread. There are just too many poor people taking up space, eating up resources, and creating a cycle of want, suffering, and well, all these poor people just make for a depressing sight. And the smells. If our sense of smell truly evolved to protect us from danger, then poverty, especially some of the smellier poor folk—are really to be avoided. Trust your instincts—a

bad-smelling place with many poor people in it is likely harmful to your nose and your other precious parts. If you find yourself in one, run away.

We recoil from poverty and its manifestations: the beggar, the wandering schizophrenics who have made the streets their home (in Filipino, we even call them *taong-grasa*, as though they were nothing more than walking smears of grease that we desperately need to wipe away with a giant WD-40 spray), the crumbling shacks that present a serious threat during typhoons.

Have you seen a sheet of corrugated roof flying at fatal speed during a storm? That's sharp enough to decapitate a socialite's head, causing a spillage of precious stones or pearls that would be thrown before swine; whether literal swine or simply the poor, whom she regards as no better than the former.

Thus, with poverty being such an eyesore, a cause for vexation and melancholy, and a threat to life and limb, it's a wonder why we haven't gotten rid of it. When you consider the millions—millions!—of poor folk wandering freely in our society, it makes you want to simply gather them all in one place—say a few islands in the extreme south or north of the archipelago. Just leave them there to do whatever it is that poor folk do. Of course, it's only proper to give them provisions for a few months—food, some clothes, diapers, etc.—but we would need to make sure they're unable to cross the sea and return to bother us again. Eventually, they'll die out and we won't hear anything more from them.

Then again, do we need to get rid of all poor people? Can't we keep a portion of their population among us—only, tightly regulated in terms of their reproductive capacity? As mentioned before, poor people tend to beget more poor people. So perhaps, a breeding program would be in order—keep some poor folk sterile, while letting others—perhaps the most able-bodied (but not

necessarily the smartest) ones—raise families? Poor people can be handy around the house and useful for tasks that the rich are unqualified for; it's best to keep enough poor people around as long as their population is controlled.

Really, would you want a rich politician cleaning your house? Would you want a Napoles heir running your office or babysitting your children? Quite a number of our rich people are woefully inadequate for actual jobs. That's why they're politicians or gambling lords, drug lords, or smugglers. They'd be extremely inept at actual office tasks or manual labor. They're the sort of rich people who are, in essence, freeloaders with very little actual skills or aptitudes besides thievery and other crimes.

As for the rich people who actually know how to make money—whether from businesses or through stock market wizardry—we would not want them to devote their time to tasks better suited for the poor, either. Let them keep running their businesses or keep playing the stock market—they're the ones who keep the economy going.

In fact, Philippine society is already im-

Poverty is like gravity—it tends to pull you down and defying it requires considerable energy.

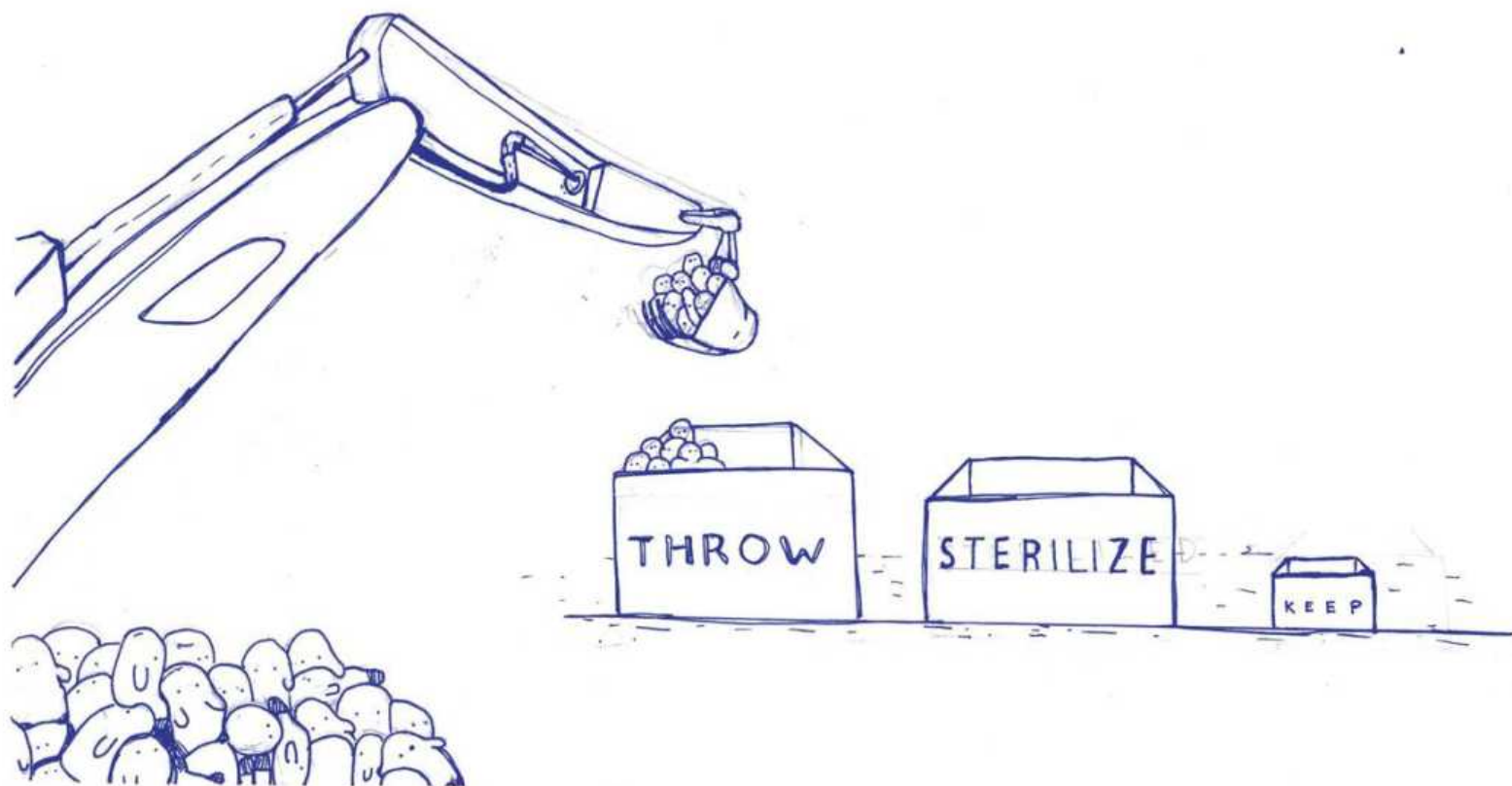
plementing some of these suggestions—except for the one on banishing most of the poor away and the one on the breeding program/population control for poor folk. This is a situation that needs swift remedy. The soundness of these two proposals simply cries out for the authorities to

smart only allows a poor person to reflect on his fate, providing a dreadful and hurtful appreciation of his status. Better to be blissfully ignorant of the meanings and implications of one's privations—and not to aspire for too much in life.

Now, for our churches. They already

more spawn of poor folk get ejected from their mothers' poor wombs every day.

The solution to that is for our churches, at least the Christian ones, to institute, just once a year, Rapture Day. Or call it the Feast of the Apocalypse or whatever. On such a day, our churches should organize a trip to



implement them. Unfortunately, there are at least three things that stand in the way of managing poverty in the Philippines: a) our form of government; b) our educational system; and c) our religious and superstitious traditions.

Under our present political system, politicians need Poor Votes. Therefore it benefits them to keep as many poor people around. This is easily remedied by switching to a parliamentary form of government or creating an electoral college with very stringent requirements for membership. Simply put, if you are poor, you can't vote. Think of the benefits this will have for our society and our politics.

As for education—we need to downgrade education for the poor. They don't need to learn too much. Our educational system must be tiered in such a way that poor people only learn the skills they need to continue being productive, yet obviously lesser, members of society. It's a proven thing that being smart and poor at the same time causes great pain and despair. Being

do a remarkable job keeping poor people in poverty. Even the purveyors of the so-called "prosperity gospel" manage to enrich themselves while promising abundance to their followers. We all know that the gospel teaches us about how evil it is to love money. We all know that religious leaders say it's all right to stay poor in this life because the true inheritance awaits us in the next world. This is a very crafty message because it is driven by the fact that getting out of poverty is extremely difficult. Poverty is like gravity—it tends to pull you down and defying it requires considerable energy. It's much easier to stay down and leave everything up to God.

And yet, we have too many churches brainwashing too many poor people with that message. As a result, more and more people stay poor. The lack of striving—encouraged by the promise of an abundant afterlife—is becoming evident in more and more people, creating more poverty. Furthermore, our largest church, the Catholic one, forbids birth control. So more and

heaven activity, where all poor people who want to go to heaven are summarily sent there. Of course, this will happen only after certain cleansing and purification rituals are performed.

The manner in which these poor people will be sent to heaven may be done as humanely as possible. Even if, say, a few hundred poor people are sent to heaven once a year, this would considerably thin out our poor population. If very few poor people want to go to heaven on their own volition, let's do it by raffle.

Poor people are not exactly a blight on our good society—but only if they are managed well. They are a necessary and beneficial resource that, with proper regulation, will help our nation march towards progress and a brighter future. Please feel free to share this message on social media but only to your like-minded and non-poor friends. Poor people who read this—at least, those who can read English—would likely misunderstand and it would not be good to have an uproar from their ranks. ■

THE LAST WORD ON GAY MARRIAGE

BY TEDDY LOCSIN, JR.
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

If a contract binds two parties and protects them against a third; and both from each other; why not two people of the same sex in the joint undertaking of getting a life?

Gay marriage? What's there to object?

What could be worse than straight marriage? The same face but older; the same shallowness on her part and the unmerited smugness of a man who has suckled wisdom from the teats of the great Og Mandino. She losing the universal beauty of all young brides but putting up a fight that makes things worse, cutting trenches here and there. And he, well, if you weren't handsome to start with, it's ugly all the way. So what is it about gay marriage that's more objectionable than straight?

Having no children can be the worst or the best part of it because they can adopt. Straight couples have been known to raise good children; gay parents more frequently spoiled ones. Gay parents compensate for I cannot imagine what—since they give their kids if anything too much attention.

Is it the physical intimacy of same sex couples? If they are women, men think about it all the time and pay or Google to see it. But can anything be more repulsive for a young girl than to share a bed with an old man sporting a flat nose however much he pays her?

I grew up thinking that gays made almost unnaturally ideal couples. I'd seen them all my life; gay relationships seemed to work well, with none of the open acrimony that is natural in straight unions. My first impressions of a cultivated life came from observing them.

Marriage to discourage promiscuity works pretty much with gay couples as with straight ones but fidelity lasts longer with gays. So I've observed in a long life. So-and-so was identified with someone no one quite knew; and it stayed that way until one died and the other was excluded from any inheritance.

It was that way in the gradual union of a rich bachelor and the housemaid who slowly rose in rank from serving his guests at table to sitting by his side, without causing the least uneasiness on anyone's part. So it was with so-and-so and the quiet man who lived with him—in what capacity became clearer as many years passed and yet they stayed together.

What's the problem with gay marriage?

None. Not in law or theology and that's the last word in that area.

In law a gay marriage partakes of the nature of a contract; the same as binds two businessmen in a mutually advantageous arrangement—or ties a victim to a crook until he is squeezed dry. So it can be in straight marriages. If a contract binds two parties and protects them against a third; and both from each other; why not two people of the same sex in the joint undertaking of getting a life?

They can't have children? Some straight couples are similarly blessed with sterility. That is not a ground for dissolving their union or disallowing it in the first place—unless they are royalty in a kingdom in need of an heir. But in the Philippines the only thing approaching royalty in manners and morals is a brand of spaghetti. A Filipino in ermine looks like a skunk buried up to his neck in fur.

Justice Kennedy is right: every person in their last illness has the inalienable right to reach out for solace and sympathy from the hand of another—of the same or the opposite sex. This is a right not invented by Kennedy but one plain for all to see if they wanted. Since the American Supreme Court, which is to say the only real world court, has spoken, this right is now recognized for all couples. Beyond that, there is no more issue. No couple, gay or straight, has the right to insist that a religion adapt to their preferences of costume and rite. A man may wear the wedding gown and a woman the tuxedo but no law can compel a priest of a real religion to officiate. I will hang by the toes the gay couple who insist on it because modern democracy was invented, first and foremost, to protect and to advance the absolute right of religions to dictate their forms of worship. The binding part of a marriage anyway takes part on the side and after the wedding, when the parties sign the legal contract of civil union and not one of wedding. And anyway, even with the church, marriage is a transitory affair appropriate only for this imperfect world for it lasts only “until death do them part.” A twice or thrice widowed spouse will have none in heaven. **ff**

LOCK UP THOSE LOINS

BY FRANCINE MEDINA MARQUEZ

SHOW AND STYLE EDITOR

The solution to the population problem may be found in chastity belts, crotch guards, and ravenous rubbers.

In *Slapstick*, a novel by Kurt Vonnegut, the People's Republic of China has found the key to solving the world's population problem: Miniaturize everyone. This way, everything will come in huge packages: land areas will be wider, food items will be humongous, and resources will be available to sustain humanity for more lifetimes.

In the non-fiction world, however, that machine would take quite some time, not to mention the moral and legal discussions that would probably take place at the halls of Congress and the Senate, and the patent of the invention.

So, we the faithful have to reckon with the ongoing argument of whether to keep the population down by planning our sex lives, or whether to simply refrain from getting any. Of course, Catholic guilt tells us that abortion is a godless act and will lead us to burn in hell.

Even Hollywood has made references to condoms as evil things. Satan's wicked rubber got its spotlight in the 1996 movie *Killer Condoms*. Here, in a New York hotel called Quicky, condoms are carnivores that bite off the penises of those who wear them.

Let's empower ourselves, our bra-burning mothers said. Our bodies, our selves. Yet, while reproductive rights are everyone's concern and duty to weigh in all kinds of views, from the liberal to the conservative, the government and church seem to be treating women as perpetual adolescents. "Here, you must have these bowl-full of free condoms or else you'll get pregnant in an instant!" the clinic staff intimidates us. Or, "You're a bad person if you use an IUD" preach religious groups. It's a continuous tug of war.

Last year, the Philippine court approved the Reproductive Health Law, a welcome development according to the government as it aligned with the UN's post-2015 Mil-

lennium Development Agenda. And here lies some condom redemption. The future will look even brighter if Satan's rubbers gear up for domination.

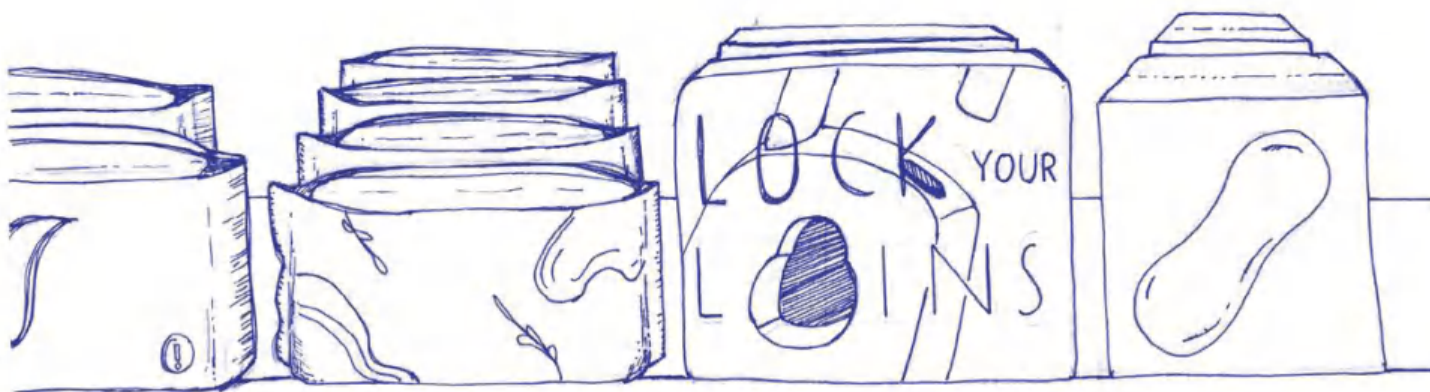
No more AIDS, no more unwanted kids. Not Utopia yet but at least we'll slowly solve the problem of congestion along with the government's lack of competence or resolve to provide its taxpayers with basic services.

Meanwhile those who are against the condom law will continue to wield their Bibles and declare that this is simply unacceptable. Ridden with Catholic guilt as the majority in this country still are, could there be a happy marriage in this? Perhaps women should just close their legs to end the argument? Chastity belts could become fashionable again. Imagine the preventive sex lock as a coitus controller.

The congregation can chalk up ideas on how to make it stylish again. "Ay, we should tap the help of our top fashion designers and mount an exhibition on chastity belts. These things could be elegant and comfortable given the right twist and embellishments! Our women will want to keep their hymens intact with these designs."

The chastity belts could be showcased during fiesta night—right after the parade of dazzling crowns and capes worn by relics. Sales of the chastity belts would go to the unwed and pregnant women who realized too late that this beautiful life processes called birthing and motherhood would entail costs.

Call it the chastity tax as proceeds of the belts would also benefit the babies turned over by their mothers to an infant care/adoption center of sorts. Oh, babies are too cute! This country is just too in love with little ones—let's not be pessimistic. Sooner or later, they'll find a home and a family that could really raise and love them. Im-



posing a “child-free policy,” even a “one-child, one-family rule,” would raise more hell than franchising condom bars. Hey, we invented the super extended family.

(But let these baby centers ensure that the mothers are duly registered lest a foundling one day decides to run for president.)

Our pious socialites can set this noble trend by posting their selfies wearing their chastity belts of the day. Steampunk chastity belts—love it! And after husbands and lovers have philandered, a woman can declare peace in her heart after rediscovering faith and that new lock for her beaded belt. The better to secure one’s precious gear, of course, and resolve to lead a life of virtue.

See, those chastity belts will work two ways: Slow down population growth and discourage spouses from rogering another woman. Well, this is assuming the condom law has been scrapped and the chastity belt law has turned into a Republic Act at least.

Don’t smirk just yet, the Philippines continues to have the most archaic laws, including tolerating rape in marriage (Article 266 in the Anti-Rape Law of 1997), decriminalizing squatting (Anti-Squatting Law Repeal Act of 1997), and getting arrested and being fined at least P500 if you’re a widow who remarries within 301 days since your husband passed away (Section 351 of the Revised Penal Code), to name a few.

On another platform, we could take our chastity belt mission to beauty pageants, thus helping improve its bad rep as being

Our pious socialites can set this noble trend by posting their selfies wearing chastity belts of the day. Steampunk chastity belts—love it!

mere flesh matches. Instead of a swimsuit category, organizers could make it an opportunity to present the belts as symbols of feminine perfection: pure, full of grace, and subservient.

And what about the men, you ask? Well they could, if they want to wear male crotch guards. In fact, go online and you’ll see a proliferation of products, sold wholesale and cheap by Chinese dealers. The problem here is that they’re categorized as sex toys, as cock cages—a prelude to a night of unleashing some jailhouse f-ck. Instead of paving the puritan path to abstinence, it got lost in translation and turned kinky instead.

Well, send in the carnivorous condoms then. Perhaps that’s when equality will truly happen. Women would not be ensnared into having sex, would not get pregnant, would not be jailed if they abort a child, or would not be prejudiced for being an unwed mom.

Meanwhile, the men will fear being snacked on by ravenous rubbers. **■**

BAWAL DAPAT MAGTAPON NG BASURA RITO

BY BERT B. SULAT, JR.
SHOW WRITER

Sa madaling salita: Ikaw na politiko ka, hindi ko papakialaman o pupunahin ang iyong pagwaldas ng kaban ng bayan basta't hindi mo ako sisitahin o ikukulong dahil sa aking pagkakalat.

Sa lahat ng bagay na panlipunan, gobyerno dapat ang ehemplo, ang pangulo dapat ang modelo. Kaya bakit hindi na lang ganito: lahat ng basura ng Pilipinas, dapat akuin ng gobyerno. Dapat lahat ng basura ng Pilipinas, itambak sa Malacañang.

Magalit na ang dapat magalit, pero halata namang kulang sa disiplinang ang Pilipino. Kulang sa disiplinang sa sadyang makasarili.

Masdan mo lang ang karaniwang mga kalye sa siyudad at makikita natin ang pruwera: basura. Sari-sari at tambak-tambak, sandamak-mak na basura.

Sa sobrang dami ng basura, minsan mapapatitig ka na lang habang iniisip ang isa sa dalawang palaisipan: “Hindi na ba gaganda ang Pilipinas?” o “Puwede kaya itong ituring na installation art?” Naalala ko tuloy ang isa sa pinakamakulay na album covers sa kasaysayan ng musika sa ‘Pinas: ‘yung sa *Fascinating World of Garbage* ng lokal na punk na bandang G. I. and the Idiots. At kahit may ibang lugar na manaka-naka lamang ang kalat, ang tanong ay parehas lang kapag gabundok ang basura: Bakit may ganyan?

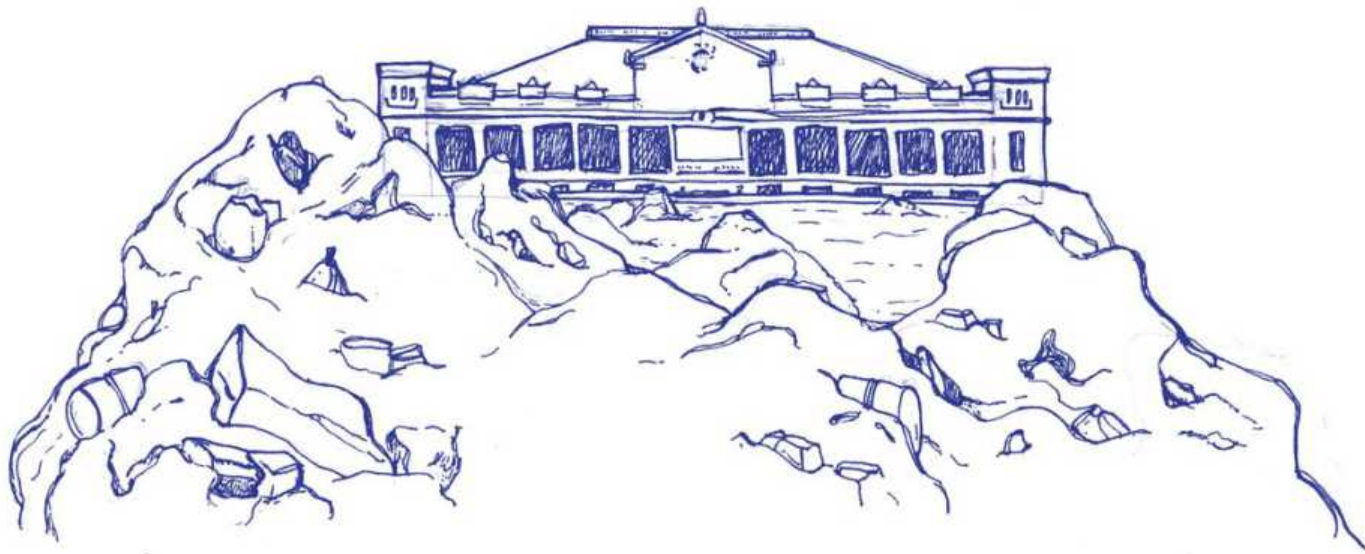
Bata, matanda, mas bata, mas matanda, nakatira sa lugar na iyon o dumayo lang, tambay man o napadaan lang, naglalakad, nasa kotse o nasa jeep puro salarin.

Matagal nang naimbento ang basurahan, pero bakit pa nga naman maghahanap ng, o lalapit sa, basurahan kung puwede namang itapon sa kalye ang iyong tira o panis na pagkain, pinagbalutan ng kendi, balat ng saging, malagkit na barbecue stick, plastik bag at straw na pinang-inom ng softdrinks, upos ng sigarilyo, mga lata o bote na simot na ang laman, mga bote ng inumin na nakapawi na ng uhaw, mga plastik na bag na hindi man lang inulit ang paggamit, gamit na diaper, at iba pang produkto ng ating mga kaibigang kapitalista, pati na rin ang mga natural na kalat gaya ng tuyong dahon at dumi ng aso. Sa aking palagay, ang nakararami kasi sa atin ay kulang sa pakialam, kulang sa malasakit, para sa ating kapwa man o sa ating kapaligiran. (Sa kabilang dako, pasalamat tayo at hindi lahat ng Pilipino ay nagsusunog ng basura, na lalong nakaka-kanser sa kalikasan.)

Siyempre, sa anumang usapin lalo na kung negatibo, hindi dapat lahatin ang tao. May ilang lugar din, sa kalakhang Maynila man o sa ilang lalawigan, na hindi mo makikitaan ng nakatiwangwang na kalat anumang sandali, kasi may disiplinang ang mga residente ng lugar na iyon o may ilang pulutong ng kasambahay ang mga taga-roon. Iyon nga lang, wala pa marahil sa isang porsyento ng Pilipinas ang kabilang sa mga ganoong kalilinis na lugar.

Tanggapin man natin o hindi, ang mentalidad kasi ng Pilipino (maliban siguro sa mga kababayan nating nangibang bansa) ay ganito: Huwag mo akong pakialaman sa trip ko at hindi ko babasagin ang trip mo. Sa madaling salita: Ikaw na politiko ka, hindi ko papakialaman o pupunahin ang iyong pagwaldas ng kaban ng bayan basta't hindi mo ako sisitahin o ikukulong dahil sa aking pagkakalat. Walang disiplinang sa itaas, wala ring disiplinang sa ibaba.

Bakit ganon? At habang panahon na lang bang ganyan ang kalagayan ng ating bansa? Hindi ba puwedeng hindi maging marumi at kahiya-hiya ang ating Inang Bayan?



Habang may buhay (ang ating bansa), may pag-asa. Sa kabila ng mahigit isang mileniyong pamumuhay ng ating bayan, kung saan dapat nagawan na ng paraan ang suliraning ito, mukhang hindi pa natalakay o napag-isipan ang lahat ng posibleng solusyon sa problema ng naglipanang basura.

Sa aking palagay, may isa pang solusyon na puwede nating suriin at posibleng ipatupad: Dapat ipunin sa iisang lugar ang ating basura na mula sa alin mang bahagi ng bansa. Luma na 'yan? Teka, hindi pa ako tapos.

Saan natin ilalagay? Sa Smokey Mountain? Sa Payatas? Sa isang landfill sa Rizal? Sa ilalim ng Manila Bay? Hindi, hindi, hindi!

Sa lahat ng bagay na panlipunan, gobyerno dapat ang ehemplo, ang pangulo dapat ang modelo. Kaya bakit hindi na lang ganito: lahat ng basura ng Pilipinas, dapat akuin ng gobyerno. Dapat lahat ng basura ng Pilipinas, itambak sa Malacañang.

Isipin natin: hindi ba dapat ang tunay na lider ay inuuna ang iba, ang kaniyang kapwa, bago ang sarili? Kung ganoon, bakit hindi akuin ng ating pamahalaan ang kalat ng bayan bilang sentro ng basura ng bansa?

Eh, ang layo sa akin ng Palasyo sa may ilog Pasig, tapos papupuntahin mo ako roon para lang itapon ang basura ko? Oo, simple pero hindi madali ang solusyong ito. Pero maaari namang isabatas ito, na bawal mag-tapon ng basura sa anumang lugar sa bansa maliban sa Malacañang. Para ganahang sumunod ang mga mamamayan, bigyan sila ng pabuya sa pagsunod sa alituntuning ito; mas malayo ang kanilang pinanggalingan, mas malaki ang pabuyang makakamit nila. At dapat ang pabuyang iyon ay hindi bubuwisan. Kundi, magkakabuwisan lang tayo.

Hindi maglalaon, para lalong hindi maabala ang lahat, miyembro man ng Aldub Nation o hindi, may mga eksperto na payayabungin pa ang plano nating ito—isang pinagsanib na puwersang kinabibilangan ng mga inhenyero at siyentipiko na makabubuo ng sistemang lagusan ng ating basura. Ang lagusan ay magmumula sa ilalim ng ating mga bahay at itutulak at ibibiyaha ang ating kalat sa milya-milyang malalapad at hindi-marurupok na tubo, papunta sa isang nakatalagang lugar sa bakuran ng ating Pangulo.

Teka, teka, paano na lang ang mga bisita sa Palasyo, lalo na ang mga dayuhan? Hindi ba mas nakakahiya kapag magpugay sila sa ating Presidente habang nakikita at naaamoy ang Beauty of the Philippines na naipon sa himpilan ng ating panguluhan?

Maaaring ganito ang atake riyan: Imbes na sa Malacañang salubungin at tanggapin ang sinumang nais makipag-ugnayan kay presidente, eh di gawin nila iyon sa tanggapan ng gobyerno na may kinalaman sa pinakapakay ni manong o aleng bisita. Mai-papakita at maipagmamayabang pa lalo ng pamahalaan ang kalinisan at kaayusan ng tanggapan at ng ating kapaligiran, na siyang posibleng ikagana ng bisita para makatungo pa rito lalo o makisosyo sa Pilipinas. At isipin na lang natin ang magiging media mileage sa buong mundo kapag nalaman at nakita nila na hindi lang napakalinis ng ating bansa kundi napaka-hindi makasarili ng ating liderato dahil inaako nito ang ating kalat.

Pag-isipan, pag-usapan, pag-away-an: Anuman ang inyong reaksiyon, sana ay hindi ninyo basta-basta ibasura ang ideyang ito. **■**

A FINAL SOLUTION

BY LOURD DE VEYRA

STYLE WRITER

**I propose detonating the bomb sometime between the hours of 9 to 11 a.m.
or 4 to 7 p.m. to ensure maximum destruction.**

Nuclear energy: the boogeyman of the '80s. The mushroom cloud was the all-purpose symbol for everything that was wrong with the modern world. But the nuclear arms race is no more and the West has effectively muted Iran's atomic yawp. We thought that by cleansing it of warheads, plutonium, and Leninist despots, the world would be all pink kittens and rainbows. But the mushroom cloud is a beautiful thing, enough for Oppenheimer to wax poetic that he is Shiva or whichever deity it is that destroys worlds. On the other hand, there is nothing remotely poetic or mythological about the sight of a clogged urban artery. Cars jammed end on end for kilometers—an ugly tableau of metal, rubber, asphalt, dust, smoke, and Daniel Padilla billboards. Grotesque, like those abandoned Soviet steel mills, Trabant cars, and David Hasselhoff songs.

“Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man.” These were the words of the Italian poet F.T. Marinetti in his Futurist Manifesto. He regarded the literature of his time as “exalting” a “pensive immobility” and I guess he might as well be talking about cars. Number nine in his manifesto declares: “We will glorify war—the world’s only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for.... We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.” That’s a mouthful from Marinetti. But I guess what he really meant was, “When the streets are choking with cars, we should bomb the shit out of them.” Marinetti, who rhapsodized the poetry of speed and acceleration as hallmarks of the 21st century, would not be too pleased with the Metro Manila gridlock.

On this issue we should have taken the APEC as opportunity to seek aid from world leaders—I speak in particular of Vladimir Putin because as of 2014, Russia still has the most number of nuclear warheads. The Arms Control Association estimates Russia’s remaining nuclear warheads at 7,700 (The United States comes second at 7,100. And instead of South Korea, which has done nothing but dump us with used buses, pesky Christian evangelists, and “Gangnam Style,” I suggest we cultivate diplomatic ties with the North, which still has eight warheads. For one warhead or two we can trade rice and bananas to benefit Kim Jong Un’s famished citizens.

If Metro Manila’s greatest problem is the total absence of urban planning, then a 10-megaton blast would be an ideal solution. Imagine the entire stretch from Monumento all the way to Roxas Boulevard.... erased. Tabula rasa, a blank slate. So blank it will make Jun Palafox pee in his panties. Tabula rasa. The Metro Manila urban planner will then be like a painter presented with an immaculately empty, freshly stretched canvas. Those ugly SMDC condominiums, gone. Think about it. Those grotesque billboards (except mine



**It makes no sense to
maintain the status quo.
You can't slay a dragon
using little needles.**

where I sell tocino) gone, with it a new public policy of banning any visual merchandise that does not bear my or Liza Soberano's likeness). Those filthy, legless beggars, overdramatic sampaguita vendors, those glue-sniffing street urchins... gone! Those stupid Metro Rail Transit stations, gone! Imagine—an urban catharsis of massive proportions. A chance to begin anew.

Nagasaki and Hiroshima since World War II can be viewed as models of urban renewal. We had a shot in 1945, when Manila was about as pulverized as Alma Moreno's dignity in an ANC interview. But we blew it.

As early as 1948, experts had already made predictions about the impending carmageddon—and in terms of areas of urban density, they were right on track. Plans to construct a monorail have been drafted as early as 1966. In '73, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency submitted to the Marcos government the Urban Transport Study in the Manila Metropolitan Area (UTSMMA), which included the addition of highways in key points, development of the Philippine National Railways, and the construction of subways and elevated rail systems. In 1976, JICA submitted another study proposing heavy rail to serve the ballooning population. Think about it: that was 1973; the LRT only started operating in 1984. What the fuck was their excuse? Too busy buying pink diamonds?

I propose detonating the bomb sometime between the hours of 9 to 11 a.m. or 4 to 7 p.m. to ensure maximum destruction. Imagine the volume of vehicles on EDSA at those hours, beautifully helpless, stuck in the stasis of their own sloth, greed, and pride, victims of a leadership that cares nothing for them anyway. One, just one mighty nuclear blast would literally render immaterial all that talk of additional train coaches that never arrive anyway, number coding systems, carpooling, Uber, GrabCar, zoning regulations, and other Band-Aid solutions.

We can worry about the urban trauma later on, but that half solves the problem of overpopulation. Thereon we can also control influx of *probinsiyanos*, telling them to forget Manila and to be more imaginative in

terms of looking at migration options, say, Sultan Kudarat or Daet, Camarines Norte. What's that? They're from Daet, Camarines Norte? Let's bomb the fuck out of Daet.

And radiation? Totally temporary, as Japan itself has shown to the world. It turned out Fat Man and Little Boy did not result in a generation of human beings with three eyes or penises on their foreheads. Instead, it showed to the world the possibility that radiation can help shape a society that is polite, efficient, and obsessively well-scrubbed.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. We are losing two billion pesos every day because of traffic, and by 2030, it will be six billion pesos. It makes no sense to maintain the status quo. You can't slay a dragon using little needles. The monster of Metro Manila traffic demands to be attacked head-on. As one poet once said, in order to make omelettes, you gotta break some eggs. And since we're on the subject of breaking eggs, I suggest we start with Joseph Emilio Aguinaldo Abaya. We do it slow and painful, using little needles. **f**



Mr. President?

Does **Jejomar Binay** look worried to you?

The Vice-President had quite a year with controversy after controversy, case after case at every turn—all while in the middle of the biggest political campaign of his life. But that's nothing new for the second most powerful man in the country and presidential hopeful. In fact, most critics and analysts would agree that even despite everything that happened this year, Malacañang is still Binay's to lose. With a solid and unwavering 30-something percent of the electorate vowing to vote for him, it is likely the incumbent V.P. will get the majority this May. But before 2016 comes, the man from Makati shares where he's been and what he's learned with **Erwin Romulo** in this Esquire exclusive.

Look who's smiling now...

Photographed by Artu Nepomuceno



To wield power, you always have to take time to dialogue with people, dialogue with the other sectors, dialogue with the other parts of the government.

LAGI KONG SINASABI, IPOKRITO AKO KAPAG HINDI AKO NATAMAAN [sa mga nangyari this year] pero diyan ko lagi sini-share iyong bisa ng pagdarasal. Paggising ko sa umaga, naiisip ko, “Ano na naman kaya ito?” Alam mo, tuwing umaga at bago matulog, nagdadasal ako. Pagbangon ko sa umaga, pagkatapos kong magdasal, biglang nakakalimutan ko na iyong problema ko. That’s the power of the prayer, I suppose.

ANG TIYO KO WAS VERY RELIGIOUS. Siya iyong nagpalaki sa akin, iyong tiyo ko. Talagang pinadadapa pa kami, pinagro-rosaryo. Siguro mga isang oras kaming nagdarasal, minsan mahigit isang oras. Malakiang impluwensiya ng tiyo ko kasi from [age] nine, siya ang naging kasama ko [sa buhay] hanggang sa namatay, [noong] nasa College of Law na yata ako.

MY MOTHER WAS A GRADE TWO SCHOOL TEACHER. And almost every afternoon, when she arrived, meron siyang [inuwing] reading books. She taught me unang-una iyong mapag-impok. Mahilig mag-savings iyon. Talagang motherly na motherly ang nanay ko, Nami-miss ko iyon. Abogado na ako, [pero] naiiyak pa ako kapag naalala ko ang nanay ko.

ACTUALLY HINDI NAMAN AKO SOLONG ANAK. Iyong panganay namin, namatay. Iyong bunso namin, namatay during infancy. So, solong anak ako actually ng nanay ko. Well, middle-class ang nanay ko dahil, supposed to be, landed sila sa Isabela.

MY FATHER, MAHILIG SIYANG SUMULAT. Sumusulat iyon sa mga diyaryo. He was connected with the public library. So, tuwing bakasyon, nagpupunta ako sa archives [ng library] para magbasa ng mga diyaryo at

kung anu-ano. Sa mga magulang ko, doon ko na-appreciate ang pagbabasa.

NOONG BUHAY PA ANG NANAY KO, meron kaming naging kasambahay. Pinaliliguan ako niyon. Nakatikim naman ako noon ng [ligo sa] maligamgam na tubig. Pagkaligo, papahiran ka ng alcohol at pulbos. Napagdaanan ko iyon. Hindi naman kami [naghihikahos] dahil sa teacher nga ang nanay ko, at nagtrabaho sa gobyerno ang tatay ko. Noong mamatay ang nanay ko, iyong kaniyang GSIS death benefit, ginamit namin para bilhin iyong bahay na tinitirhan namin. Mga ilang buwan lang after, nasunog iyong bahay sa Libertad. Nang masunog iyon, napilitan kaming tumira sa Makati. Doon nakatira ang tiyo ko. Doon nagsimula iyong impluwensiya ng tiyo ko sa akin. Nandiyan pa rin ang tatay ko pero ang may impluwensiya na sa akin, tiyo ko. Kasi iyon na ang nagpaaral sa akin.

SA BAHAY NG TIYO KO, ANG TURING SA AKIN, KAMAG-ANAK, PAMANGKING BUO. So, kasama ako sa pagkain, hapunan, tanghalian. Pero pagkatapos naming kumain, kasama akong nag-iimimis, kumukuha ng plato at naghuhugas. Iyong tiyo ko, lahat ng kaniyang ideas para sa mga anak niya, sa akin ibinuhos, iyong mga gusto niya sanang mangyari [para sa kanila].

GUMIGISING AKO NG ALAS-CINCO NG UMAGA, kahit na iyong dalawang [anak ng tiyuhin] ko, natutulog pa hanggang alas-ochong, alas-nueve. Para magwalis [sa kalye], [gumawa ng gawaing bahay]. Pagkatapos, ilalabas ko iyong mga [alagang] manok, mga dalawampung manok iyon. Iyong mga Texas, kapag [pinakawalan] mo sa hawla, nanunuka. Masakit iyon. Pagkapakin ko sa mga manok, saka ako maga-almusal. Doon

sa amin, naniniwala kami sa “Kaniyang buntot, kaniyang hila. Kaniyang sungay, kaniyang dala.” Kahit nagha-happenings ka, dapat gawin mo iyong trabaho mo.

NAMAMALENGKE AKO pagkatapos magalmusal ako. Magaling akong mamalengke, mahilig [kasi] akong tumawad. Pero nadevelop ko iyong mag-build ng tiwala [kapag] suki tayo. Huwag ko lang mahuhuli na ang presyo mo, mas mataas sa iba.

SO, PAGKAGALING SA PALENGKE, AKOMANG-HIHINGI [NAMAN] AKO NG KANING-BABOY. Manghihingi ng mga tira-tira sa mga kapitbahay, tapos lalagyan mo iyon ng darakat pulut, hahaluin mo iyon. Kapag tapos na ko [sa gawaing bahay], saka na ako manananghalian. Pagkatapos mananghalian o kaya magpagpakain ng baboy, maglalaba na ako. Marunong ako maglalaba, ha (laughs). Natuto nga akong mabuhay sa mundo [nang maaga].

GUSTO KONG MAGING PILOTO NOON. Gusto kong mag-military. Sa palagay ko, karamihan sa mga bata siguro noong panahon namin, gustong mag-sundalo, mahilig sa mga giyera-giyera. Magaling [din] ako sa history and current events, ang taas [ng marka] ko sa klase noong grade school saka high school. Saka bata pa ako, talagang balak ko talagang mahalal, later on magiging Pangulo, ambisyon ko na talaga iyan. O di kaya, gusto kong sumikat.

PRODUKTO AKO NG PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM. Sa Philippine Normal [University] ako nag-aral. [Naging classroom officer pa ako noon.



NOONG NASA COLLEGE OF LAW AKO, NAGING MEMBER AKO NG STUDENT COUNCIL SA UP. Mahilig ako mag-innovate kaya iyan ang isang dahilan kung bakit ako natadtad ng kaso noong Mayor pa ako, dahil diyan sa innovation-innovation ko.

INABOT KO IYONG FIRST QUARTER STORM. Kasama ako sa mga rally, sumisigaw ng, “Hey! Hey, LBJ (US President Lyndon B. Johnson – Ed.)! How many kids did you kill today?” Kasama namin sina [Raul] Manglapus. Iyong kay President Marcos, nandoon ako nang mag-sign sa ataul noon sa Congress.

NANGANGATAL RIN KAMI NOON. Nang matakpos na iyong rally, eh di uuwi na ako, tapos [biglang] nasalubong namin iyong isang bus [ng pulis] na naman, takbo na naman [ulit]. Ayaw kami papasukin, doon sa isang building. Sigaw ko, “Putang ina mo, papatayin na kami, putang ina, ayaw mo pa magpapasok!” Kitang-kita ko iyong mga batang [kasama naming] na pinatay ng mga pulis sa palò, kitang kita namin iyon. [Kapag naaalala] ko iyon, lalo pang tumitibay iyong pakikibaka bilang aktibista. Militante kami, eh.

WALA, DI NAMAN AKO TAKOT DU’N SA KULUNGAN. Noong nasa jail ako, sabi sa akin ng misis ko, “O, makakalabas ka na raw, pumirma na ko dito sa Oath of Allegiance (sa New Society).” Sagot ko, “Ay naku, kung ako magsisisi, dapat hindi ko na ito ginawa. Para saan ba naman, ito?” Sabi ko, pakakawalan din ako dito. Magsasawa din ‘tong mga ‘to. At pinakawalan [nga] kami, after three months.

LAGI KONG SINASABI, “HUWAG KANG MAINIP.” Sasama lang ang loob mo kapag nainip ka. Isipin mo na lang kaagad na pangmatagalan ito, para di sasama ang loob mo.

NOONG MGA JUNIOR LAWYERS PA LANG KAMI, TAGABUHAT LANG KAMI NG MGA LIBRO. Tagabit kami ng folio ng kaso, nandoon ka lang, assistant ka lang. We were practicing on our own, pero kapag may mga bisita, ayun, nakakasama namin iyong mga bigshots like sina Joker Arroyo, [kasi ang] hinahawakan nilang kaso kay [Senator] Ninoy Aquino. Paminsamininsan assistant, pero iyong sa lower courts, diyan kami active. Natutuwa ako doon, ang kalaban [kasi] naming, talagang big names sa legal practice. Nananalo kami doon (laughs).

MAS POLITICAL KAMI NINA JOKER ARROYO, RENE SAGUISAG, AT TITO GUINGONA. Of course, ang aming patron ay si Senator [Lorenzo] Tañada. Kami nina Arroyo, grupo-grupo. Iyan ang masaya [sa ginagawa naming], kasi may sense of fulfillment. Nagmamartsa kami, sinasalubong kami ng mga pulis, takbuhan kami. Mina-machine gun pa kami [ng mga pulis].

WE WERE ONCE INVITED TO MEET PRESIDENT MARCOS IN MALACANANG. Kaya tuwing magmi-meeting kami doon sa loob, [lalo na] ngayong nasa gobyerno na ako, natutuwa ako [dahil naaalala ko] sa hall na iyon sa tuwing uma-attend ako (laughs). Maghapon kami noon.

MARAMING BESES AKONG NAKULONG. Halimbawa, magpapa-rally ka, ikukulong ng pulis, sumasama kami sa kulungan (laughs). Nakakulong ka [rin]. Okay lang naman, eh, kasama sa trabaho iyon.

MERON KAMING SENSE OF FULFILLMENT LALO NA IYONG SA EDSA REVOLUTION. Ah, I enjoyed those times. Very much. May sense of fulfillment. Narinig ko sa radyo, nagkakagulo sa EDSA. Kasama ko si Noynoy Aquino [nang tumawag] si Cory. Ang sabi ni Cory, “Noy, sunduin mo ang mga kapatid mo sa Times Street.” Eh di sinundo namin sina Ballsy, Pinky at Viel and dinala namin sa Wack Wack, sa bahay ng kapatid ni Cory.

THAT NIGHT, NAGPUNTA AKO KAY CORY TO CONGRATULATE HER. Pagdating ko, ang daming tao. Sunud-sunod ang interview kay Cory. Katabi ko ngayong nakatayo na naghihintay kay Cory si [Senator Aquilino] Nene Pimentel. Sabi niya, “Jojo, ikaw na ang Mayor ng Makati.” Sabi ko, “Ha?!” Sabi niya [Cory], ako na ang magiging minister of local government. Noong madaling araw na, umuwi na kami. Sabi ng kasama ko, “Pare, punta muna tayo sa Ayala.” Pagdating namin doon sa may estatwa ni Gabriela Silang (ngayon, estatwa na ni Ninoy Aquino ang nandoon), sabi ko, “Baba tayo, pare.” Tinignan ko yung landscape. Ang ganda-ganda ng Ayala sa madaling araw. By the time, nabasa ko na iyong buhay ng siga-sigang mayor ng New York, iyong Hudyo. Tinignan ko lahat ng mga building, at naisip ko, “Ako na ngayon ang siga dito.” Itong Ayala, ako na ngayon ang boss nito. Eh dati, clerk lang ako dito.” Tapos, umuwi na kami.

PAG-UWI KO SA BAHAY, GINISING KO ANG MISIS KO, sabi ko, “Ling, Ling, gumising ka, Mayor na ako.” Sabi sa akin ng asawa ko, “Madaling araw na, matulog ka na!” Sabi ko, “Excuse me, huwag mong sinisigawan si Mayor.”

TO WIELD POWER, YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO TAKE TIME TO DIALOGUE WITH PEOPLE, dialogue with the other sectors, dialogue with the other parts of the government.

MAGKAIBA IYONG GRAFT AND CORRUPTION. Graft has something to do with procedure. Corruption is basically on pera-pera. Karamihan sa mga kaso ko, [may kinalaman] sa procedure.

HANGGANG NGAYON, KAPAG HINDI AKO NAKAPAG-SIESTA, LOW BATT NA AKO PAGDATING NG MGA ALAS-CINCO. Saka antok na antok pa ako pagkatapos kumain. Kaya wala akong hilig diyan sa mga lunchtime-lunchtime. [Noong nag-aaral pa ako,] Alas-cuatro hanggang alas-ochong y media ang klase namin. Minsan naiiwanan pa ako ng bus, kasi ang pera ko, eksakto lang sa pamasaha. Minsan, naglalakad ako mula Baclaran hanggang Makati, kasi nalagpasan ako ng bus o nakatulog ako sa dyip.

WHAT MADE ME LAST THIS LONG IN POLITICS? Siguro, I got a lot of common sense, if at all, ha. Being practical. Native talent, as they usually say.

I THINK POLITICS HAS NOT CHANGED. It remains dirty. It’s full of promises, but never complied [with]. Especially in the latter part of President Aquino’s administration, wala na. His decisions were more political. For example, this underspending, a good manager (generally) always spends, especially in the government. After all, the government is the number one employer. The government is expected to spend for the delivery of [public] service, doing what the government is expected to do. Underspending? (laughs)

THE MOST MEMORABLE CAMPAIGN FOR ME WAS WHEN I RAN FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY. Even my wife and children didn’t think I would win. But I knew I would. I told them, “Mananalo ako.” ■





One last thing before I go...

The Meaning of Life 2015

Brotherhood. Psychic income. Aldub. The afterworld. What is the meaning of life? Gerry Baja and Anthony Taberna, Rene Saguisag, Joey De Leon, and Bro. Mike Velarde—men of considerable influence and regard, achievement and notoriety—share with Erwin Romulo their learnings and regrets, insights and counsel in Esquire's final "What I've Learned" series of the year.

Joey de Leon

Comedian



Photograph by Artu Nepomuceno

Mayabang ba ako kapag sinabi kong alam ko na ang lahat tungkol sa mga babae?

AS YOU GROW OLDER, humahaba na iyong love. Iyong sex, umiikli. Ang love lang talaga ang naiwan. Family lang ang love. Doon lang nage-endure ang love.

IMPORTANTE SA LOVE AND SEX, UNANG-UNA, [AY ANG] SMELL. Bumabagsak ang lahat ng interest mo kapag pangit iyong smell. Humahaba na iyong love, umiikli ang sex. Ganoon talaga. Minsan, mas masarap [pa ang] matulog. At saka minsan, may mga [ibang] interest ka na like, travel, art, kuwela, kuwentuhan. Iyon ang totoong buhay. Iyon ang real life adventure.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED FROM MY KIDS? Wala, eh. Nasa [stage] pa kami na they're learning from me.

ONE OF MY FIRST JOBS WAS TO EXPOSE SLIDES, mga slides para malaman natin iyong pollen incidence sa Metro Manila. Nagtatrabaho ako noon sa National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST). Sa bubong ng La Concordia College, two places every day, from Monday to Friday, binabalikan ko iyon para kunin iyong slides para pag-aralan ng mga doktor kung ano ang pollen incidence, para sa asthma o sa allergy. [Sa] Centro Escolar University (CEU), pumapanik ako sa fire escape from the ground to the roof. Walang [harness] iyon. Dire-diretso iyon. Ganoon ako katapang. If you badly need the job, ang courage mo, mataas. Kapag successful ka na, hihina na iyong courage mo. Nag-iingat ka na, eh.

[SA EAT BULAGA] HINDI NA COURAGE IYON, passion na iyon. Love for the show. Love for what you do.

IF I COULD CHOOSE MY LAST MEAL? Callos, isa sa favorite ko iyon. Pero palagay ko hindi na ko makakakain iyon, eh. Dessert na lang. Mocha ice cream ang favorite ko.

BEST THING I EVER DID WITH MONEY is travel.

MAYABANG BA [AKO] KAPAG SINABI KONG ALAM KO NA ANG LAHAT [tungkol sa mga babae]?

NGAYON, [PIKON NA PIKON AKO] SA MGA BUWIS-IT AT WALANG UTAK NA BASHER. Pero minsan, nilalaro ko na rin, ini-enjoy ko [na lang]. [At saka] iyong mga mahina sa oras, mga hindi punctual. Sa oras, masyado kaming mahigpit.

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME: "A good life is expensive. There is something cheaper but it is not life." Huwag kang magtipid. Hindi life iyan kapag nagtipid ka o [naghangad ng] mura.

WE KNEW WE HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL back in the mid-70's [shows] Discorama and Student Canteen when we did Tough Hits and Wacky News.

NOONG [ALDUB: SA TAMANG PANAHON] SA PHILIPPINE ARENA, NAIYAK KAMING LAHAT. Openly saka kani-kaniya. Ako, lagi naman eh, basta natuwa ako, at karaniwan, tungkol sa show. Hayop ang ano namin, eh... 36 years, record siya. Eto[ng AlDub],

bago pa sa amin ito. Akalain ba nanging sikat na kami, ganito pa katindi pala iyong [mangyayari]?

BEING WITH VIC AND TITO, I learned that being three in the photo is not bad luck!

WHEN WE STARTED DOING EAT BULAGA, we paid for our own lunches... in our first 10 years!

BEST THING ABOUT FAME? Pinapauna ka. Worst is nahuhuli ka rin dahil sa kodakan!

WHAT HAVE I SACRIFICED? No sacrifice, all fun.

YOU ASKED ME IF COMEDY IN THE PHILIPPINES WILL EVER GROW UP. I don't know about "growing" but it will stay.


I DON'T HAVE IDOLS but I have great respect for those who write and who can write comedy.

BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT: Be on time always and don't stop learning.

ALDUB IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST SUCCESSES. Being here for almost four decades, hindi pa ba success 'yun?

WHAT KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT? Writing.

ANG CONTROVERSY, hindi ko pinapansin.

HINDI TOTOO IYONG COMEDY = TIME + TRAGEDY. Comedy is never pain. Sino man nagsabi niyon, sasaktan ko! 

A black and white photograph of two men, Gerry Baja and Anthony Taberna, working in a broadcast studio. They are both wearing light-colored shirts and glasses. Gerry Baja is in the foreground, looking down at a mixing console. Anthony Taberna is in the background, also looking down. A large microphone on a boom arm is positioned over the mixing console. The studio has a window with a grid pattern in the background.

Gerry Baja and Anthony Taberna

Broadcast Journalists

Photograph by Kitkat Pajaro

Kapag meron ka palang nako-contribute sa lipunan mo, kahit papaano, masarap talaga ang trabaho na ito.

GERRY BAJA: SOBRANG IMPRESSED AKO KAY US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA—the way he talks, how he delivers his message, *ganoon kahusay*. And then *iyong* charisma *niya sa tao*—*kapag* nagsasalita *siya, kahit hindi mo maintindihan minsan, pakikilingan mo, eh. Maa-attract ka sa kaniya hindi lang dahil sa itsura niya kundi pati sa tono ng boses niya* and how he delivers his message.

ANTHONY TABERNA: NA-INTERVIEW KO NA SI COCO MARTIN SA ISANG SHOW. *Ibang klase din pala itong pinagdaanan ng taong ito. Hindi lang iyong hiras ng buhay, pati iyong personal adventures niya, maling decisions [in the past], iyong pagsuko niya. Tapos ngayon—nakita mo naman, highest-paid ABS-CBN talent ngayon. Hindi siya pulitiko, pero para sa akin, impressive iyong ginagawa niya para sa sarili at sa bayan.*

GB: MAGKASUNOD LANG KAMI. Pareho kami ng pinagdaanan. *Habang nag-aaral, nagtatrabaho doon sa dating station bilang news writer at reporter. Basically iyong training namin, halos pareho. Noong malipat ako dito noong 1995, napapakinggan na siya ng mga nandito noon.*

AT: PERSONALLY, NAKITA KO KUNG ANO'NG NANG-YARI KAY GERRY SA DZEC, *iyong dati naming radio station. Kung ano iyong dinaanan niya, sinusundan ko lang. Noong 1999, iyong former station manager namin dito, si Angelo Palmones, gumawa siya ng isang weekend show. Noong dumaan na si Gerry, sabi niya kay Gerry, "O, ikaw naman ang main anchor. Aalis na ako. Iyong ibang reporter naman ang iikot." Kaya lang, ang napansin ni Angelo, hindi stable ang ratings dahil iba-iba iyong nakaka-partner ni Gerry. So tinanong ako ni Angelo, "Kaya mo bang mag-programa?" Eh siyempre, galing ako sa DZEC. Iyong training namin medyo kakaiba—anchor ka, reporter ka, PA (production assistant) ka, writer ka, producer ka, lahat. So sabi ko, oo.*

GB: SECRET NAMIN? Actually, hindi namin alam, eh. Wala naman kaming script. Walang meeting before the show. Walang producer na nagga-guide sa amin kung ano'ng pag-uusapan. Siguro, dahil nga pareho kami ng training, ng orientation, so nagdya-jive iyong takbo ng isip namin. Hindi nagkakakontra-han. Nagsu-swak, eh.

AT: WHEN GERRY WAS SENT TO THE US for three weeks five years ago, *naiwan lang ako dito tapos binigyan nila ako ng ibang partner. Grabe. Alam mo, parang wala akong partner. Parang inaalagaan ko iyong partner ko. Hirap na hirap ako. Napakahirap talaga. May sarili rin naman siyang galing, iyong timpla lang. Hindi sapat iyong kape niya sa gatas ko, eh. Pero kapag si Gerry, magkatinginan lang kami o kaya may sinabi lang ako na mukhang alam niya, susundan na niya. May sinabi siyang parang alam ko, sasaluhin ko. Sabi nga nila, para [kaming] Dolphy and Panchito.*

AT: MAY MGA TIMES [DIN] KAMI NA [MIN-SAN] HINDI KAMI MAGKASUNDO. Lumalabas naman iyon, eh. May pagkakataong may hard-line stance ako sa isang bagay, meron din siya, so magka-clash kami. Kapag nararamdaman na namin on air iyon, hindi magandang pakikungan. Hindi ito scripted. May ilang pagkakataon na nag-clash kami on air. Pangit talaga pakikungan. Hindi talaga kami bagay na nag-aaway on air.

GB: NOONG UNA, IYON ANG SINA-SUGGEST NILA. Mag-good cop, bad cop. Ganoon daw ang gawin namin. Gusto naming mag-eksperimento pero hindi natural, eh. Kapag hindi natural, parang pilit. Nagkukunwari ka lang na kokontra-hin mo.

GB: VERY BROAD NAMAN TALAGA ANG ROLE NG ISANG BROADCAST JOURNALIST, pero depende iyan sa situation, eh. Kapag may calamities or emergencies, mayroong particular role ang broadcast media to inform. Iyong ginawa kong thesis [tungkol sa] 1991 earthquake, ang laki ng naging role ng media, lalo na ng broadcast, nasa DZEC pa ako noon. Doon mo makikita kung gaano kalaki ang papel ng broadcast media para marating ang pinaka-remote na area na hindi nararating kahit ng gobyerno. So iyong mga sitwasyon sa malalayong lugar, nalalaman ng government dahil sa radio. Ganoon din, palagay ko, hanggang ngayon. Sa politics, talagang nakaka-impluwensya ang broadcaster sa pagpili ng mga tao. Kapag ipapakilala kung anong klaseng pulitiko ka, may epekto iyon sa mga tao.

AT: AS A BROADCASTER/COMMENTATOR, KAILANGAN TALAGA YOU SHOULD TAKE SIDES ON ISSUES.

GB: ISSUES, OO; PERO SA PERSONALITIES, HINDI.

AT: DURING THE TIME OF PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO, TALAGANG HATE NA HATE NIYA KAMI. We learned that she sent an emissary dito sa ABS-CBN. Siguro nabuwisit na sa amin. Pinapakisuyuan o inuutusan ang management ng ABS-CBN to "do something about these two stupid boys," parang ganoon. But in fairness to ABS-CBN management, in fairness to our boss, he did not succumb to the pressure. He let us do our job.

AT: IN 2010, CAMPAIGN PERIOD [NOON], naimbitahan ako sa Tacloban. Nagsalita ako sa isang eskuwela roon. Noong Sunday morning, pag-uwi ko sa bahay, may mga tao, may mga pulis. Iyong kapitbahay ko pala ay nilagyan ng improvised explosive device sa gate niya, mga 300 meters away from my house. Namage iyong garahe niya at iyong dalawang kotse niya, pati iyong taxi na nakaparada sa harap ng bahay niya. Pagkatapos ng investigation, sabi sa akin ng police, "Hindi sa kapitbahay mo intended iyong bomba, [kundi] sa iyo." Pumutok iyong bomba, 4:30 ng umaga. Every 4:30 in the morning, every Sunday, lumalabas iyong misis ko papunta sa church. Nauuna siya, ako alas-singko umaalis. Imagine, kung nagbukas siya ng gate nang ganoong oras, may masasaktan. Sabi ko, hindi na death threat iyon, ah. Actual na iyon.

AT: ANO'NG KINAKATAKUTAN KO? MISIS KO. (LAUGHS)

AT: NOONG UMPISA, NOONG NAPASOK AKO SA BROADCAST, SURVIVAL LANG NAMAN TALAGA, EH. Mass Comm [graduate] ako, pero gusto ko lang mabuhay. Kailangan ko lang magtrabaho habang nag-aaral para makatapos ako ng pag-aaral. Ganoon lang. Pero habang tumatagal ka pala dito, may nagagawa ka. Halimbawa, may sinabi ka lang, magbabago iyong desisyon ng mga policy makers natin. Kahit na hindi sabihin na si Gerry at Anthony ang may kagagawan niyan, alam nating parte [kami] niyan. Kapag meron ka palang nako-contribute sa lipunan mo, kahit papaano, masarap talaga ang trabaho na ito. 📺



Bro. Mike Velarde
Religious Leader

Photograph by JL Javier

There were times when you think, “Talaga bang may Diyos?”

I LOOK AT EACH EXPERIENCE. I’m always in a state of prayer.

EVERY MOMENT, you are aware that God is there so you make yourself feel his security, his presence. *Kasi ang mundo, magulo na, hindi ba?* There are so many distractions and attractions. *Hindi naman [sila] masama, pero* sometimes because of them, *karamihan [sa atin] wala nang [kinikilalang] diyos, eh. Kani-kaniya na lang kaya magulo ang paligid.*

THERE WERE TIMES WHEN YOU THINK, “TALAGA BANG MAY DIYOS?” Kung may malaking problema, it seems that everything is going nowhere or sometimes you’re left alone or *hindi lang sa iyo, pero nakikita mo rin sa ibang tao na tila walang nangyayari.* Sometimes I ask that *pero ganoon lang talaga iyan.*

I ALWAYS CRY. I cry most of the time when I feel the goodness of God.

THE QUESTION MANY ARE ASKING [IS]: “HOW DO YOU FEEL IN FRONT OF THE CROWD?” Normal lang. I just deliver the message as if I’m talking to one person. So that one person is listening among the crowd or the entire crowd listens carefully, *na parang kami lang.* It’s an intimate conversation that the person you are talking to *naiintindihan. Kahit iyong mga nasa telebisyon.* In fact, *kahit iyong mga ibang nagkukuwento sa akin, nasa telebisyon lang, nanonood.* Sabi nila, “How is it that iyong topic parang ako iyon? At iyong kinakausap mo, parang ako iyon? At saka iyong mga tanong ko in my mind, sinasagot mo rin? How is that?” Because at that moment, I am not myself. I am just a vehicle of the Holy Spirit who came to those persons *na nangangailangan.*

IYONG MGA PUMUPURING IYON, PAKINGGAN MO NA LANG. And then mag-ingat ka rin, *titignan mo iyong nagpupuri at ano ang dahilan kung bakit nagpupuri. Kasi iyan, pupuri iyan kapag mayroong nakukuha.* Don’t be carried [away] by [praises], just say thank you. *Pero* don’t get carried away by those *na magandang manalita. Kasi,*

ang attitude ko dito ay ganito: iyong kaibigan mo ngayon, bukas maaaring kaaway mo na iyon.

YOU LISTEN TO CRITICISM THEN ASK YOURSELF, IS IT TRUE? If it is true, thank them because *may nagsasabi sa iyo.* You have time to reform. *Kung hindi naman totoo, paninira lang, so what? Problema na nila iyon.*

MAY NAGSABI NGA NOON, A CARDINAL, “Mike Velarde is a good son of the Church but he has no substance.” *May mga tao, nag-react. Ako naman, hindi. Sabi ko naman, tama naman iyon kasi wala naman akong pinag-aralan sa religion at sa Bibliya.* What I’m trying to tell people is what I’m experiencing, *iyong kabutihan ng Diyos.* What God is doing to me and to other people for me. But *sabi ko,* one thing I can tell the Cardinal is [that] I have faith. And the Bible describes faith as “the substance of things hoped for.”

SINASABI SA AKIN NG MISIS KO at sa mga anak namin: “Magsipag kayo sapagkat wala kayong mamanahin sa tatay nyo. *Iyong [bursa] niya parang butas na buslo iyan. Papasok ang pera sa kanan, labas sa kaliwa. Kaya walang naiipon iyan.*”

MAY NAGTANONG SA AKIN, “TOTOO BANG MAY AFTERLIFE SAKA MAY LANGIT AT IMPIYERNO?” Sabi ko, *walang makapagsasabi niyan kung totoo. Pero ang totoo, mamamatay tayong lahat.* Where will you [walk]? *May isang atheist, noong malapit nang mamatay, nag-isip, “Totoo kaya? Anong mangyayari sa akin kung maniniwala ako? Kung totoo, mabibigla ako. Kung hindi naman totoo, no problem.” Pero ang sabi niya,* “If it is true, I might as well believe it before I die. To prepare myself for what will come.”

SABI NI SAN AGUSTIN, “Faith is believing the things we do not see, and the reward of faith is seeing what we believe.”

NAG-PREACH AKO MINSAN SA MGA TAO, sabi ko, “Huwag kayong matatakot sapagkat wala namang nakakaalam. Even Jesus does not know when that last day will be.”

MAY NAGTANONG, “KAILAN BA TALAGA MATATAPOS ANG MUNDO?” Sabi ko, “Close your eyes and stop breathing. That is the end of your world.”

IN PRIVATE, I DRESS PLAINLY. *Pero sa stage, colorful ako* because of the crowd. *Malayo na sila, eh. Wala kang makikita sa stage except iyong damit na gumagalaw* so you get their attention. Color has life.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A DREAM? *Buhay na buhay ang nakikita mo sa panaginip mo. Pero iyong katawan mo, naiiwan sa higaan.* And then *paggising mo,* vivid na vivid ang nakikita mo. So there’s life beyond this planet.

SABI NI SAN PABLO, “To God who is able to do more than all we ask or imagine.” In other words, *higit pa sa ating hihingin at iisipin, makakarating sa iyo.*

THERE ARE SOME TESTIMONIES FROM THE BOOK, PROOF OF HEAVEN BY EBEN ALEXANDER. HE WAS AN ATHEIST. He was a neurologist... So *ang nangyari dito,* the neurologist was comatose for seven days. As a person in comatose, the brain has already stopped functioning. So *bakit* during the seven days, he traveled? He saw places, mountains, and rivers. He met his sister, *na hindi niya nakilala dati.* To test God, *may prayer requests siyang dalawa—to know his biological parents (because he was adopted), and to meet God.* And these two things happened at that moment.

MY OWN VISION ABOUT HEAVEN? I have more or less a notion [from what] author Eben Alexander was [telling us]. He saw those places, the mountains, the rivers. The Bible says, I knew heaven and I knew Earth will be created.

SIGURO ANG GUSTO KONG BALIKAN, *iyong mga lugar noong ako’y bata pa sa Catanduanes. Tahimik ang buhay noon. Doon ako naliligo sa mga crystal clear na ilog. Ngayon wala na iyan. Polluted na. I believe makikita natin iyon.* ■

Rene Saguisag

Lawyer, Public Servant, Hero



Photograph by Joseph Pascual

For one to take part in an electoral process in a dictatorship is to help forge the links in your chain.

WHEN I LEFT FOR THE US [to study law], maybe I was 100 miles to the right of Marcos. I didn't like students telling the leaders how to run the country. I was very conservative. But in '67 when I got in, that was the height of the Vietnam protest. At times, it was very hard to go to Harvard because of the demonstrations. And then the following year, I went to Berkeley, another hotbed, there would be tear gas. That was part of my education in the US. Martin Luther King was assassinated, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated... those developments could not have left me unaffected. And when I came home (during the) First Quarter Storm, I came home maybe 100 miles to the left of Marcos.

WELL, IF I HAD MET PRESIDENT MARCOS BEFORE I LEFT FOR THE US, I would have probably given him the benefit of the doubt. But after I came home, I probably would have told him where to go. Biased *na ta-laga ako*.

WHEN I ARRIVED BACK [IN MANILA] on December 30 (or January), I signed up with Ayala Corporation. But on my way down [to their offices], I hitched a ride with a fellow Bedan who was going to the BIR. When we got to the Supreme Court, I saw a rally being led by Roger Ayala, a good friend from the Ateneo. So I said, "I'm getting off. I want to join my kind of people." So even before I started with Ayala Corporation that very same day, I sent a letter of resignation.

IF I HAD STAYED WITH AYALA, maybe I would be in some plutocratic enclave now.

I FOUNDED THE SAN BEDA FREE LEGAL AID CLINIC when I was in law school as a human rights lawyer, totally unknown in the legal zoo when I was a student. That probably was one reason why I won as Senator in 1987 without having to spend

a single centavo of my own. The Filipino could be grateful. There's a saying in Spanish, "*Amor con amor se paga* (love is repaid with love)."

I'D RATHER EARN PSYCHIC INCOME because that was what drove me to law school in the first place—to make a difference for the poor, the obscure, and the oppressed. Of course, psychic income is not treated as legal tender in Cash & Carry, but it satisfies you in a more meaningful sense.

THAT IS ONE SAD DEVELOPMENT I KEEP HEARING ABOUT [THE YOUTH TODAY]. No consciousness about [Martial Law], how it was during those dark years. It was really terrifying, the first few years. If you have people like me (Ninoy Aquino and Ka Pepe Diokno) being detained for years, without any charges! Ka Pepe was released in 1974 and founded a free legal aid assistance group, which I also joined. Ninoy Aquino had a heart problem, and for the First Couple to release him, it was because they did not want to take any responsibility should anything happen to him here in the country. During the first elections [in] 1978, Ninoy Aquino lost to non-entities, and that was why we started a boycott movement, agreeing with the Greeks in 1974.

FOR ONE TO TAKE PART IN AN ELECTORAL PROCESS IN A DICTATORSHIP is to help forge the links in your own chains.

MY FAMILY COULD NOT COMPLAIN because I neglected all of them equally. I remember that my darling [wife] Dulce was so supportive and never questioned except for one Christmas. I attended a Christmas party for lawyers, a mere walking distance from home. So after dinner here, I disappeared and went to the party. When I came home, she did not berate me, but tears were falling softly from her eyes and she said, "*Pati ba naman [sa] Pasko, wala*

kang panahon sa amin?" I had so many shortcomings as a husband and father because it was a time when I thought that the country should come first. Maybe it was poor judgment [on my part]. When she [died], I realized I was not the husband I should have been, even the father I should have been.

IT WASN'T HARD TO GIVE UP POWER, because I told my staff and myself, "We're here only for a short visit."

SOMEONE ONCE GOT MY COUNSEL and told me, "Now I realize what a Jesuit priest taught us at the Ateneo: 'When you laugh, the whole world laughs with you. But [when] you weep, [you weep] alone.'"

ALL MY LIFE, IMAGINE—topnotcher, cum laude, Harvard Law, full scholar—but I was not able to provide my family a home.

NOW, FINALLY I ADMIT TO BEING SCARED OF ONE THING—long, lingering, hopeless illness. And if that happens to me, the little that we have would be spent on my care for nothing. So I just hope that the good Lord will continue to take care of me as another lily of the field. That has been the story of my life. I took seriously what I read in the Bible that the odds are worse for a rich man than a camel passing through the eye of a needle. So I just hope that next time I am admitted to Makati Med, that I would be treated gently.

I FEEL ONLY MELANCHOLY SEEING MY COMRADES PASS AWAY. We were more than brothers. *Talagang lintik ang integridad ng mga iyan* and *wala pa kami* compared to those we followed. How to bring back the glory of the Senate is a huge problem. ■

A black and white photograph of a woman with long, dark, wet hair. She is wearing a white towel draped over her shoulders, with her hands clasped in front of her. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight, enigmatic smile. The background is a plain, light color.

Midwinter is Coming



Riding elephants, petting tigers, and joining the country's biggest reality show, 2015 was definitely good to Margo Midwinter. But as great as her breakout year was, the future seems even brighter for this month's Woman We Love.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOSEPH PASCUAL



Margo Midwinter sounds like a character from *Game of Thrones*, a fantastical warrior princess who slays demons and commands dragons. It's the kind of name that fits in with wicked queens, valiant knights, and enchanted kingdoms. That's not to say though that Margo Midwinter in real life isn't all that interesting, because if you had the year she did, you'd see that it was better than anything Westeros could ever offer.

ESQUIRE: It seems like this was your breakout year.

MARGO MIDWINTER: Definitely. This year I got to travel a lot, do a lot of things on my bucket list like scuba diving, cliff jumping, riding elephants, and touching tigers. Aside from traveling and modeling, I got to be a housemate in *Pinoy Big Brother*.

ESQ: That's quite a list. So would you say you're adventurous?

MM: Normally no when it comes to being adventurous, but this year I kind of pushed myself to try new things because [my job] modeling is usually about looking and waiting for the next project or next job. I realized that this life is all we have so I wanted to really experience it and try everything I could. So I went to Cambodia, Thailand, and basically I just wanted to travel and be like a backpacker but not quite. Because you know backpackers seem to have a lot of adventures but I think living with just a backpack is quite sad because you don't have enough clothes.

ESQ: From everything you did this year, what terrified you the most?

MM: The scariest thing I did was ziplining and I did it here in the Philippines in Osamis where they had the highest zipline. To get there, we had to ride a buggy car up the mountain and then it broke down halfway. So we had to wait for the horse to trot us all the way up. When you go down, it's

okay since it's fast, but then they have to bring you back up the same way. So the winds were blowing and you kind of swing a little, and they make you stop at the middle, really high above. I kept looking down and thinking, "Well if I fall and land there maybe I'd survive."

ESQ: Which was crazier though, that or joining *Pinoy Big Brother*?

MM: *PBB*, definitely. You think it's just going to be a vacation. But actually *mahirap talaga* because you're thrown in into an environment where it's going to be fun, with different people, but eventually, being there every day, when you're in that close proximity and you're being watched, it's bound to take its toll on you. And you really have no communication with the outside world. You kind of start to overthink your life and start to have really deep thoughts about how you're being portrayed. It's really exciting though and, in the whole process, you'll feel really blessed that you're there, that you were chosen to be part of it after over 30,000 people auditioned for it.

ESQ: What did you learn about yourself or about the whole thing?

MM: The house kind of brings out an extreme version of yourself. [Of course] it's a TV show so you have to tell yourself to be entertaining in all aspects. It brings out things about you that you never re-

ally realized.

The house also brought out this positive side of me that really wasn't there before. I decided that I was going to make the most of my time at the house *kahit mahirap*.

ESQ: What was the first thing you did after getting out?

MM: The first thing I did was go to the spa and get a massage and sleep because we're actually a little sleep deprived inside the house. Sometimes we'd try and test like how much sleep we actually got because there really was no sense of time inside. So we'd try and test it by leaving the treadmill on to measure it and it was something like five to six hours.

ESQ: You grew up in the U.K. What's it like there?

MM: *Sa U.K., hindi mahirap mag-drive diyen*. The weather though is [very gloomy], very *Twilight*. So if you like *Twilight* you'll like it there (laughs).

ESQ: So what made you decide to move here?

MM: When I came here, it was sort of like an adventure. After college abroad, I wanted to live outside of the system, and seeing as there was an opportunity here for me to model, [I went for it] and now there are no regrets.

ESQ: First thing that stuck out for you when you got here?

MM: Traffic that is for sure,

that's like number one.

ESQ: What's the longest you've been on the road?


MM: I think I've experienced three hours of Manila traffic. And I kind of kept my sanity by rolling down my window and asking a boy to buy me a Coca-Cola and some *chichirya*.

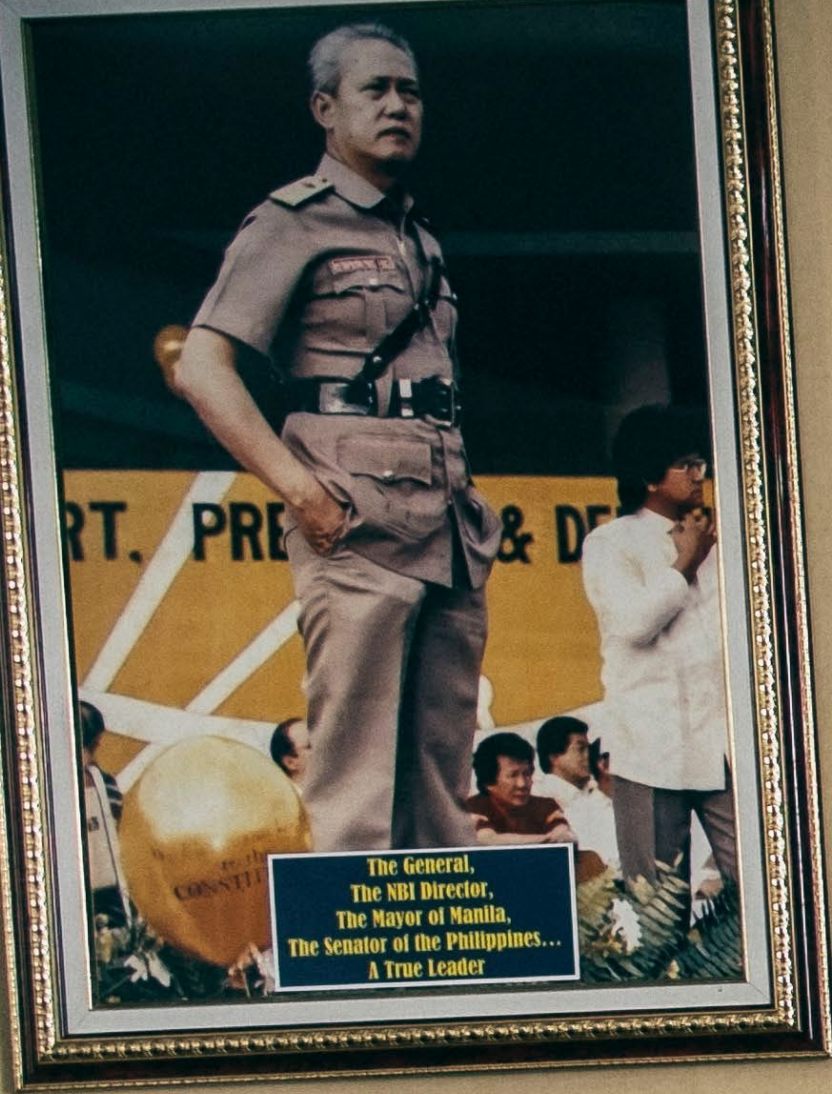
ESQ: Really?

MM: Yes! At first I thought I could just get out of the car and do it myself but I was a bit worried to get out of my car in the middle of Malate. I didn't even know where the nearest *sari-sari* store or 7-11 was. So, this little boy, he was a street kid I think, he did it and I gave him some pesos and I said to him, "Do you want to sit inside first and have a little chat?" So we were drinking our Coca-Cola and ate our *chichirya*. He was about six or seven and we got to talk a little but I did tell him, "You know you're not supposed to go inside strangers' cars."

ESQ: You had quite an eventful 2015. What's your biggest lesson from this year?

MM: I never really realized how much of a positive person I was before I joined *PBB* so that's something I wanted and decided to keep moving forward. I also got a lot more followers online thanks to the show.

ESQ: Hopefully you get a couple more after this. 





THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER

Erwin Romulo spends time with Alfredo Lim, a man who is never late, never smiles, and never changes.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON QUIBILAN

The traffic going to the Bataan Shipping and Engineering Company compound or BASECO is light this Saturday morning.

For the trucks converging at Anda Circle on the boundary of Intramuros and the Port Area, there are hardly any vehicles. The roads are clear. Even for a weekend this is unusual. The start of “-ber” months, or the Filipino Christmas season, is usually the heaviest of the year, especially around the shopping malls to which every major thoroughfare seemingly leads. It’s been made worse in recent times by the record-high density of vehicles on the streets as well as the repeated breakdowns in the public rail system. The past week though, the nation’s capital was the host city of the Asian Pacific Economic Conference or APEC. Since Tuesday, all work and school have been called off to ease the traffic and ensure that the world leaders and other VIPs in attendance would get to their appointments without delay. Roads were closed off and even commercial flights were cancelled for the event. Many residents left as early as the Sunday prior for their vacations, leaving the city almost deserted. This probably explains why it took less than 30 minutes from the Legaspi Towers in Malate to get to the slum area.

Earlier, at the swimming pool area of the Legaspi Tower’s 4th floor, friends and supporters of Alfredo Lim gathered for breakfast with the former mayor. He stayed with them for only an hour before heading back upstairs to his apartment, promising that he would return shortly. In his absence, they continued to talk among themselves, most of them decked in yellow shirts and sitting on mint-green monobloc chairs, plates of pan de sal and cake still left on the table. Coffee was being served and consumed quickly, the cups taken away as soon as they had been drained of their contents to be washed for re-use. The talk was about the upcoming campaign and how it would be waged. Ultimately, it was about the incumbent in City Hall, Lim’s chief nemesis in the last elections in 2013: former president Joseph Estrada.

Then suddenly, it’s over. Everyone starts filing out, heading for the stairs and the elevators. Apparently, the former mayor is not coming back down to rejoin them—at least not here. He is rushing to the BASECO compound where he is also expected to speak this morning. Lim is not one to be late. (When he was mayor of Manila in the 1990s he was famously photographed stopping a passing motorcycle and hitching a ride to city hall so as to be on time for his meetings.)

Located within Barangay 649, the largest in the Port Area district of Manila, the BASECO compound was built on dreams of being the country’s main shipbuilding facility. Frequently ravaged by fires, it has become infamous as a slum. It is home to Manila’s urban poor, including a significant Muslim population. A *karinderiya* selling halal food stands incongruously opposite posters advertising cheap brandy. With the election coming up, the faces of officials and candidates for next year’s local polls are plastered on to every surface. It is said that this area is also the hangout and stomping ground of notorious street gangs, but on this morning they are nowhere to be seen.

Inside the BASECO’s evacuation center building, Lim is already speaking. He begins by apologizing that he will not be able to stay long with them. He tells them that after giving a short speech he will be going around other districts to distribute wheelchairs that he had promised to residents there. But he will be back soon in the coming months to be with them. Like many politicians, he starts off by acknowledging the leaders of the group that invited him here today. The group that invited him is the Bangsamoro Overseas Filipino Workers Organization Inc., which is celebrating its fifth year anniversary. Reading from a list, he gazes up after each name to look for the person that goes with it. Not everyone on the list is there. When a name is called





and no one stands up, Lim quips plainly that the missing persons are probably with his opponent. “*Okay lang. Masaya sila doon,*” he says.

He then begins a tirade against Estrada whom he refers to by his popular moniker “Erap.” For over 45 minutes, he takes shots at the sitting mayor. But first, he addresses the charge against himself that when he turned over the mayoralty seat, Manila was left bankrupt. Brandishing papers in one hand and a microphone in the other, he says that he is holding documents signed by Estrada’s own appointed treasurer, dated a week after he left office, that proves the city had more than P778 million in its accounts. He enjoins the people gathered there to look at the documents. He has made photocopies of them to be distributed for their perusal and scrutiny. “*Hindi ako magnanakaw,*” he says. “*Ang magnanakaw ay ang nakaupo sa City Hall.*”

To illustrate his point, he then asks everyone to name all the presidents of the Philippines, one by one. When no one in the assembled audience is forthcoming with answers, he starts it off himself by reciting the name of Manuel L. Quezon, proceeding to go down the list until he reaches Estrada’s name. He then points out that of all the presidents who have taken office, there is only one who has been

convicted in our courts for plunder.

Lim then states that in his 54 years of public service, in the police force, at the National Bureau of Investigation, in the senate and as mayor, there have been no cases against him regarding corruption or the stealing of public funds. During his term as mayor, hospitals (which offered free medical services) and other buildings such as this evacuation center were built.

But he tells them not to credit him because it was their taxes that built these. “*Kayo ang nagtayo nito! Kayo ang gumastos!*” This last statement is met with loud applause and cheers from everyone present.

“*Totoo bang corrupt si Erap?*” he asks. “*Eh, nung naging mayor si Erap, gumaan ba buhay ninyo?*”

Lim doesn’t wait for an answer. He points out that what was free during his time like hospitals and schools are not free any longer. He didn’t raise taxes, though that was proposed when he took office. Neither does he have many women he needs to support. (Lim was widowed in 1994 but has since remarried.)

“*Ba’t ako natalo?*” he asks, referring to his loss to Estrada in 2013, “*dahil binili ang boto n’yo...*”



“Totoo bang corrupt si Erap?” he asks. “Eh, nung naging mayor si Erap, gumaan ba buhay ninyo?”

“Pero sa susunod na halalan, kapag bigyan kayo ng pera... tang-gapin ninyo! Pera ninyo yon, eh, kaya tangappin ninyo ang pera pero... iboto ninyo ang hindi magnanakaw... Dahil sasabihin ko kay Erap... Magnanakaw ka!”

With that, Lim finishes.

He then asks his staff to bring in the wheelchairs. This is something that Lim has done for years, even after he lost in 2013. Stacks of wheelchairs, still in their boxes, line the corridor outside his apartment. Every weekend he delivers them to the disabled around Manila.

When he is asked to speak in poor communities he also brings a couple of them to give away. His staff brings four of them into the evacuation center here in BASECO. This is the time for pictures to be taken.

There is a little delay in the proceedings when only two elderly women are carried into their seats for the photo op. The leaders who’ve invited Lim here today take a few minutes to look for others to fill up the two other vacancies. After a few minutes, two other women, looking not quite as elderly as the first two, are produced and put into position in the remaining seats. With all four wheelchairs occupied, the former mayor demonstrates their practical use by pushing each occupant around. It is a little difficult. There isn’t much floor space available as the rest of the crowd moves closer, hoping to get a chance to take a selfie with their guest of honor. After he is done, he poses for a few of them but not once does he smile. His face registers no annoyance, either. He remains placid, quite stoic even as he is surrounded by toothy smiles. He starts to make his way out of the building. Like he had told them earlier, he had many appointments to keep that morning and he is not one to be late. Despite this, he still stops for

pictures when someone asks, even up to his car. It is something he has accepted as part of his duty and service to his people.

He spots me right before opening the door to his car. And for the first time that morning he addresses me directly: “*Sasama ka ba?*”

“I was born in 1929. During these times before World War II, they say that people were good.

After World War II, something changed in their character. You know, because of their need. Whereas before, it’s really prohibited to commit the act of stealing. But after World War II during the Liberation and even during World War II, because of the scarcity of food, people were compelled to do things, which were not accepted before.”

Alfredo Lim is sitting across the table from me when he tells me this. This isn’t him being wistful or nostalgic. It is an expression of horror and disgust at how things are now.

We are in his apartment for a sit-down interview, a few days before I watched him speak and dispense wheelchairs at the BASECO evacuation center. The last interview we did here was in 2009. The first time, however, was in late 1997, just as he was preparing for a presidential bid. His apartment back then looked very different. The room we are now in was sparser. Not drab, but harsher. Every piece of furniture was there for their utility and not much else. I also still remember that none of the chairs around the table in the living room matched. The overall impression—as the photographer with me at the time said—gave the whole place the look of a safe house, or the kind of place to which fugitives retreat, or a room where interrogations took place. (I have never been to one so I will just take his word for it.) Today, it looks brighter and a bit more furnished. Remarkably, all the chairs around the table are of the same make and design.

But the man is unchanged.

I ask him if he pines for an earlier time.

“Yes, because people then were decent, good, and respectable. And they respect each other’s rights. There was minimal trouble then. But after Liberation, with so many different people congregating in Manila, that destroyed the character of Manila.”

So has nothing gotten better?

“Not with the character. Because the people were good. They don’t try to harm other people or (cause) trouble.

“But after Liberation, there’s the change. There were so many problems already. Because we don’t know each other. Before, people

knew each other in the neighborhood, so there were less problems.”

I’m sure Lim knows what he is talking about. He has lived in this city practically all his life. Born in Tondo, he was conceived out of wedlock and was left by his mother at the Hospicio de San Jose orphanage. He remained there until he was in Grade 3, when his maternal grandmother adopted and brought him home to Sampaloc. Most of the schools he attended, San Beda, Far Eastern University and the University of Santo Tomas are also located in Manila. And when he first became a policeman he was assigned to San Nicholas in Binondo.

“In my time, if you were given a beat, you pounded that beat on foot,” Nick Joaquin quotes Lim as saying in his biography, when asked about his early days as a policeman. “You had to walk every inch of it.”

and held it hostage at the Rizal Park in Luneta. Inside with him were 21 Hong Kong tourists, two Chinese tourist guides, and a Filipino driver. He was demanding to be reinstated into the police force, claiming that he was set up for the charge of extortion. The Ombudsman refused but sent a letter promising to review the case, which the hostage-taker dismissed as “garbage.” Mendoza’s brother, Gregorio, also a policeman, came to the scene apparently to convince him to surrender. It was reported that Lim ordered the police to take the brother to the station in Tondo after negotiations failed. The hostage-taker was watching the media coverage on the television in the bus and witnessed his brother resisting while being taken away. Soon after, shots were heard being fired from within the bus. The SWAT descended and a shootout ensued.

be settled after a few hours. After the hostage crisis dragged on into the afternoon, I decided to go there...

“The one handling the negotiation was the Chief of Police. I never interfered in his talks with the hostage-taker. I attended a hostage negotiation seminar for one month at the FBI Academy with other Chiefs of Police. And they taught us that we should not meddle with the hostage negotiation. To let the hostage negotiator talk. And the hostage-taker must not talk with anybody else except the hostage negotiator. That’s the principle of hostage negotiation. That’s why we’re not interfering. The [media] do not understand the principles of hostage negotiation. The hostage negotiator can only concur with the Chief of Police if he feels that he could not decide what should be done. It’s only the Chief of Police and

I’m not saying I’m the only man who could do things for Manila... But I think the record will stand, that I have not been involved in any shenanigans whether personal or official.

“You come to know people in the neighborhood,” he tells me when I ask him about that time. “There are three shifts: morning, afternoon, and nightshift. So you’re given an assignment, several blocks of streets, and you patrol that during the morning for 30 days. Then the afternoon shift after that. You come to know people because you are walking in the streets.

“But in my case, it was strange because when I patrol, so many small kids followed me. It was a sight: a policeman being followed by children.

“And some of them were clinging to my pants or my shirt. I was happy because children liked me. But they didn’t approach other policemen. I don’t know why.

“Sometimes I bought them ice cream or candy.”

I ask him if he still walks around the streets.

“No. I ride a car.”

On the morning of August 23, 2010, a few months after the election of a new president and Lim himself had won re-election as Mayor of Manila, an ex-policeman named Rolando Mendoza boarded a tourist bus in Fort Santiago in Intramuros

By the end of the crisis, eight hostages and Mendoza were dead.

The newly elected president Benigno S. Aquino ordered a probe. It found Lim liable along with Department of Interior and Local Government undersecretary Rico Puno and National Police Director General Jesus Verzosa of administrative and criminal culpability for mishandling the hostage crisis. But the president only approved the filing of administrative charges for “misconduct and simple neglect” against Lim. (The other two were cleared by Aquino.)

Despite this, there are many who still blame Lim. These accusers claim that he is already too old for the job.

I ask Lim if he thinks—as his critics and rivals claim—that his age has affected his judgment. Or what he makes of the rumor that he was falling asleep during the discussions during the hostage taking.

“That’s a big lie,” he says.

“When that hostage crisis occurred, that was about 10 a.m., if I recall right. And the Chief of Police told me that he’s going to handle the case. So I said, go ahead. I was at the office. Vice Mayor Isko Moreno was in my office and he heard about it. He said he would go there. I said, “Go ahead.” That was in the morning. But I thought it would

him. Even the Chief of Police cannot talk with the hostage-taker, only the hostage-negotiator.”

To this day, Lim remains adamant that it wasn’t his fault, pointing out again that he never handled the negotiations with Mendoza.

When I ask him if he was affected by seeing all the dead when he visited and inspected the scene after, he says that it is part of the job. “*Sanay na tayo dyan, eh*,” he says.

On the subject of killing, I remind him that I asked him back in 2007 how many people he has killed.

Lim had been accused of extra-judicial killings of criminals and I just wanted to know how many he would say died from his own gun. He answered a modest “six or seven.” All in the line of duty, he qualified, then, during shoot-outs with the police.

Now I can see Lim thinking, remembering. Then, he starts to count with his fingers...

“I think it’s more than seven,” he tells me. Does he remember how many?

"The first one was in Sta. Ana... There were five in the shootout at the precinct. Then later on... there were four. So that's nine. There were several others. I think there were another three..."

He runs out of fingers.

I ask him what he thinks of Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, whose admirers and critics compare him to Lim. In particular, his method of fighting crime, which has brought him the attention of human rights advocates. Such accusations have hounded Lim for decades and it was also the source of his appeal when there was a groundswell for him to run as president in 1998. The moniker "Lim Kwan Yew" was coined, in reference to Singapore's recently departed leader's so-called "benign dictatorship." (Lim eventually lost, coincidentally enough, to Estrada. He was the first major candidate to concede during that election.)

He calls Duterte his role model, though he says they haven't spoken to each in years. "*Kung mayroon lang dalawampung Mayor Duterte sa Pilipinas, aba, tatahimik ang bayan natin.* Because they're fighting this criminal element."

His critics, like yours, cite his record on human rights.

"They do not know what's going on. Perhaps that's their impression or opinion. They're talking about the human rights of these criminal elements. They have their human rights, but what about the victims? *Eto'ng mga pinapatay nila. Nakalimutan na nila? Eh ngayon, kung hindi naman aaksyunan itong mga kriminal na ito, eh di, papatay nang papatay yan. Alam naman nila na yung mga pinaggagawa nila, mga mabibigat na krimen, so they never surrender. Pag huhulihin na sila, lumalaban.*"

So you admire him.

"Yes, I respect him."

(He tells me later on that he wants Duterte to run for president. At the time of our interview, the mayor from Davao had not yet formally announced his bid for the presidency in 2016.)

Given that he appears to be number one in the surveys for the mayoralty post next year (with Estrada reportedly placing third), I ask him if he thinks he's the only man who can save Manila.

"I'm not saying I'm the only man who could do things for Manila. There are other candidates. [But] I think the record will stand, that I have not been involved in any shenanigans, whether personal or official."

Has Erap done anything good for Manila, though?

"*Marami naman siguro.* If I answer that, I'll be biased. Let the people answer. *Kung may nagawa siyang mabuti, eh di good for him. Kung may nagawang masama, eh good for him also. Kasi hindi naman siya iboboto ng mga tao, eh. Malalaman natin someday."*



Back in 1998, during a televised interview on the program

of the late columnist and journalist Teodoro Benigno, Lim wept. It was clear he was trying his best not to, taking out his handkerchief to repeatedly wipe his eyes. But despite his efforts to maintain his composure, he kept crying. It was a sight that moved even Benigno to tears.

Lim had been talking about his grandmother—the one who had brought him home after his mother left the young boy in an orphanage. (She would care for him until her death.) Opponents questioned his citizenship, given the circumstances surrounding his birth. There were charges that he was not a natural-born Filipino. In the heated rhetoric of election season, Lim was being branded "Intsik" even in mainstream media. The usually quiet Lim decided to clear up the issue once and for all. He had never before openly revealed that he was born illegitimate. Even in Joaquin's biography, it is merely implied.

I ask him if he still cries.

Lim tells me he does, especially when he thinks about his grandmother.

"She loved me very much. More than my mother. *Kaya ako naiyak, noong namatay kasi ang grandmother ko, Japanese time, April 10, 1943. Kaya ako naiyak, naging successful ako sa buhay, hindi ko man lang nagantihan yung pagmamahal na binigay sa akin. Pag may hindi magandang nangyayari, minsan naiisip ko, sana bata pa ako under the care of my grandmother.*"

I ask him what he thinks about the charges against Senator Grace Poe, who was also abandoned as an infant and is now running to be president.

"*Politika eh, alam mo naman yung siraan. Di ba sinisiraan siya? Kung anu-ano sinasabi. Bakit hindi nila pabayaang tumakbo na lang.* And let the people decide. *Kasalanan*

ba ng bata na foundling siya? Anong kinalaman noong sa pagkakapanganak sa kanya? Hindi maganda yun, eh. Atakihin mo ang tao sa karakter niya. Kunwari, nagsasamantala siya sa panunungkulan, o nagnanakaw ng kuwarta ng bayan. Iyon, atakihin mo doon. Hindi yung sa pagkakapanganak."

After departing from BASECO, Alfredo Lim makes his rounds,

visiting other districts in Manila to deliver his wheelchairs. Unlike earlier though, there is no program set up for the turnover. In each of the areas he goes to, he alights from his vehicle, walks straight to the home of the intended recipient and knocks on the door. One of his staff follows him to carry the wheelchair, along with a couple of supporters.

He is, of course, expected.

After the wheelchair is taken out of its box, the disabled resident is brought out and placed in the seat. Like earlier, Lim pushes them for a couple of meters as pictures are taken.

Even on his way back to his car, he poses for selfies with the other residents in the area. Again, he never once flashes a smile. His face remains neutral throughout. Perhaps this is the Lim that the general public mostly recognizes and remembers anyway. Not the one who weeps. Not even the one who shows anger.

In fact, he looks like he is always alone, even in the company of people. There is the quality of a monolith about him, standing solitary and defiant amidst a changing landscape and the passage of eras. Something about him looks self-contained and that hasn't changed since we first met almost 20 years ago.

For me, there is something reassuring about that. ■



Esquire

FICTION

AND THE UNIVERSE

Worlds live. Worlds die. Or so the saying goes. In the end, the greatest lesson our heroes can teach us is that they die. Entropy is inevitable and death comes for us no matter what earth we live in.

BY LUIS KATIGBAK

ART BY KRISTINE CAGUIAT
AND STEPH MANUEL

I don't
remember much
about the Crisis. I
remember red
skies, shadow
demons, dinosaurs
and spacemen
side by side, and
the city—all cities,
everywhere, all
places—falling
apart all
around me.



People, screaming. I want to say ordinary people, aware of how that makes me sound. Ordinary as opposed to what? As opposed to us. The superheroes. Colorfully garbed, impossibly empowered, we would fly to scoop up the people tumbling out of burning buildings, and hold back crumbling walls with our super strength while others fled to safety.

Safety being a relative concept, of course. This was the big one. The emergency to dwarf all other emergencies. There we were, every hero that had ever fleetingly graced the pages of a comic book, from the martial arts acrobats all the way to the near-gods, all holding the line against annihilation.

Worlds would live. Worlds would die. And the universe would never be the same.



We talk about nothing in particular.
I tell her I love her, something I
didn't do often enough when she
was alive. And I ask her: You do
know you're dead, right?

Ever since she died, my mother has been visiting me in my dreams.

This happens every night: she's there, with me, and it's like old days. Always, we're either still living in the Parañaque house I grew up in, the house she made a home out of with my brash Batangueño father, or in the UP Campus house she grew up in with my genius grandmother, a Professor Emeritus turned too-early widow.

Both homes are lost to us now. We had to sell the Parañaque place to pay for my mother's accumulation of hospital bills, and the University of the Philippines awarded my Lola's house, where my mother and Titos and Titas had all grown up and where we had spent countless happy Sundays, to another professor when she retired. The new tenant cut down the decades-old tree in the back yard that had been Lola's favorite and made a table out of it.

In my dreams with my mother, everything is wonderfully normal, except of course for the fact that she's still alive. Sometimes we have this special chorizo for breakfast that she orders from the son of a friend. Sometimes it's pancakes, or Spamsilog. We talk about nothing in particular. I tell her I love her, something I didn't do often enough when she was alive. And I ask her: You do know you're dead, right?

I wasn't one of the main guys, not one of the big iconic heroes. I had some strength, some speed, some minor energy projection abilities. Enough to save a citizen or two or two dozen, defi-

nately, but not enough to join the main assault against the cosmic villain who was tearing our universes apart.

But the big iconic heroes spoke to us as if we all mattered. We were part of it. We were necessary. Every effort, every sacrifice, had weight. And as the waves of anti-matter sent by the big cosmic bad guy started killing us—the mid-level to minor heroes—instead of despairing, I thought: this is a good day to die.

My mother was not, by any stretch of the definition, a geek. My obsession with comics was something she and my father deemed excessive and assumed I would outgrow in time. Still, they would let me badger them into taking me to the comics shops of Greenhills Shopping Center almost every weekend, where I could choose one or two precious (and to their minds, overpriced) U.S. comics to take home.

This was in the early and mid-1980s. Like any child of the time I was aware of comics of course, but mostly what we had before were cheap supermarket reprints of limited runs of random titles. Some issues of *Detective Comics*, some Supermen, occasional *Spider-Man* stories, and slightly more offbeat titles like *House of Mystery* or *Shogun Warriors*, all on substandard paper with the colors printed haphazardly.

The discovery that there were shops that had started importing new comics, on a monthly basis, from the States—and that, for the most part, these new comics were so much better—better written, better

The anti-matter
didn't care. The
anti-matter made
no distinctions.
There was no
reasoning with
it, no bargaining.
Heroes, villains,
vehicles,
buildings,
time, space: it
ate through
everything.



ILLUSTRATION STEPH MANUEL

drawn—was one of the major turning points of my boyhood. I was stunned, I was smitten, I was hopelessly enraptured.

And in 1985—to celebrate their 50th anniversary—DC Comics, home to Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, the Flash, and so many others, launched the 12-issue “maxi-series” *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, a series that my young heart would immediately enshrine as the greatest comic book ever made.

Fighting a shadow demon was like fighting poison smoke. Except that the smoke could suddenly solidify and punch your face off. They were the worst.

No, that’s not true. The worst was the relentlessly advancing wall of anti-matter that was dissolving everything it touched, disassembling our reality, eating our worlds. You could lose a fight to a shadow demon, but at least you could say you had been in a fight.

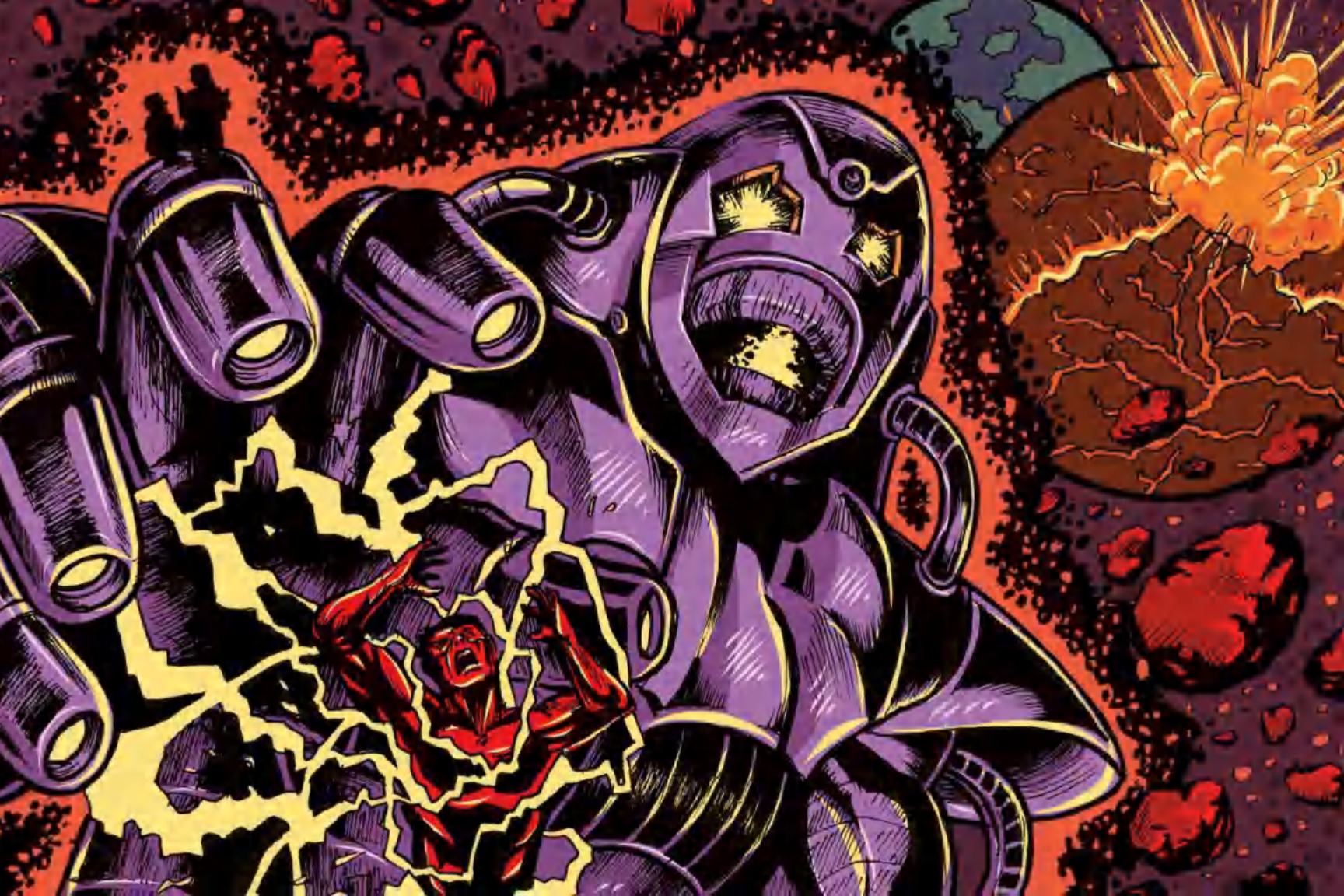
How many colleagues—how many friends—did I watch disappear into that insatiable void? Some of them faced it in a frenzy of last-stand bravado, unleashing energy blast after energy blast into its guts, affecting it not

one bit as it engulfed them. Some of them were caught off-guard, struck in mid-leap or mid-flight, even as they were trying to shepherd others out of harm’s way, to save them.

The anti-matter didn’t care. The anti-matter made no distinctions. There was no reasoning with it, no bargaining. Heroes, villains, vehicles, buildings, time, space: it ate through everything.

Blinded by my love, I would on occasion try to convert my parents. I was young enough to believe that if they would just sit down and give the stuff a chance—if they would deign to read about the Fantastic Four being put on trial for saving the planet-eating Galactus, or about the steel-skinned Colossus breaking the heart of the ghost-abled Kitty Pryde, or about the ultimate and devastating betrayal of Terra of the Teen Titans—then they, too, would know the wonder I felt, and understand why these comics mattered so much to me.

I was wrong, of course. It was just that I was the right age, and had the right mindset. Not that comics are “just for kids,” as the old as-



sumption goes, but that quite simply, they're not for everyone. So many factors can count when it comes to loving an art form; my obsession made me overlook that.

But for a few glorious months in 1985, my mother, heavily pregnant with my December-due sister, let me choose her reading material.

Having grown up in a house of books, she was familiar with the works of Joyce, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, all the 20th century greats. She had been recommending Camus to me for quite some time. Capote was another favorite. But for those months of bed rest, as my sister slept and grew inside her, I suppose she felt—possibly due to fondly vague girlhood memories, who knows?—a yearning for lighter fare.

I gave her *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

The big cosmic villain was called the Anti-Monitor. He was the commander of the shadow demons; he had released the anti-matter wave. He was not out for revenge, or spurred by misguided righteousness; not motivated by twisted love. He was lord of the anti-matter realm, and he was expanding his territory and his power by consuming,

world-by-world and universe-by-universe, our positive-matter existence.

There is no counting our losses. Imagine, for example, the death of your best friend, and not just the best friend you've known since you were children together, but every version of him or her, every alternate-universe best friend, every possible one, dissolved and consumed forever, with staggering finality.

Before the Crisis, I had met several alternate-universe versions of myself: a female one, a funny-animal one, even an evil one. Now, as far as I know, I am the only me left.

***Crisis on Infinite Earths* was a labor of love.** It was also quite possibly the worst comic to foist on someone who had not read comics in over three decades. It featured literally hundreds of characters, drawn from DC's entire publication history as well as its acquisitions of smaller comics companies. The plot was dense and the artwork incredibly detailed and dramatic. It served as a showcase not just for their most popular, recognizable characters, but also as a nod and fond farewell to characters that, either through age or changing trends or both, had fallen out of favor. There are hundreds of great moments spread throughout

the 12 issues of *Crisis*, but it is not, if I recall correctly, the tightest or most coherent of reads.

I loved it all the same. Loved the story by Marv Wolfman, loved the art by George Pérez.

Crisis on Infinite Earths was ongoing when I got my mother into it; I think it must have been on issue four or five at the time. Happy as I was that she was giving my favorite series a read-through (paving the way for her inevitable future addiction, or so I assumed), I made sure she missed no nuance by explaining each and every character background and plot reference, from talking ape-men to wizards from Atlantis to the 30th century culture of the Legion of Super-Heroes. To her credit and as testament to her abiding patience at this time, she let me natter on endlessly.

I'm in there too, I told her one afternoon. She looked at me, and awaited the inevitable explanation.

I said that every superhero ever at least, in the DC multiverse was involved in the *Crisis*. That was one of the things I loved about it—its sheer massive scale. (“Worlds will live! Worlds will die!”) And like every comics-obsessed geek, I had come up with alter egos, my own superhero wish fulfillment fantasies, and I had projected one of them into that story. I

Imagine, for example, the death of your best friend, and not just the best friend you've known since you were children together, but every version of him or her, every alternate-universe best friend, every possible one, dissolved and consumed forever, with staggering finality.







I still fight
crime as best
I can, though
sometimes
it starts to
feel a little
pointless.

imagined him shoulder to shoulder with Superman or Cyborg, saving lives under skies turned hell-red, fighting the good fight until the end. Perhaps it was a way of deepening even further my already alarming attachment to the series, my way of getting a firmer grip on a story that sprawled and spawned so much.

Mom understood, I think.

In the end, we won, of course, though it cost us dearly.

Supergirl died. The Flash died. But the Anti-Monitor was defeated. Superman, the original Superman who started it all—the whole superheroic tradition—dealt the final blow.

The remains of the multiverse cohered into one true world, a strong if not seamless world. A world ready, or so everyone hoped, for new stories.

This is not a proper goodbye to my mother. I don't think I'm any good at those.

I am 40 years old. Mom was about this age when I practically forced her to read *Crisis*

on *Infinite Earths*. She never did finish it; after she gave birth there was, of course, too much to do. It doesn't really matter.

Mom was unconscious when she passed away, in a hospital with a team of doctors trying to revive her. I can't remember the last conversation we had in this life. It was probably some admonition to watch what I eat, or to beware of secondhand smoke. Missing her has become part of me; my world altered and cohered around her absence.

Mom had three children. I have had none.

Tonight when I dream of her I will tell her again that I love her. I don't know why I can never say the other things that come to my mind; for example, I'd like to know when I can finally join her, and my grandmother, and everyone I loved and lost, on the other side.

Like I said, I don't remember much about the *Crisis*, or at least not as much as I should. And I can feel my memories slipping, bleeding away bit by bit, in the four-color sunlight of this brave

new bittersweet world.

I still fight crime as best I can, though sometimes it starts to feel a little pointless.

I often find myself thinking of that wall of oblivion, that wave of anti-matter that I lost so many colleagues and friends to, and wonder why I wasn't one of them. The universe is not through with me yet, I tell myself, imagining some grand future moment of nick-of-time, save-the-world glory. But I could just as easily die any night from a gunshot, or a blow to the head; I'm strong but not invulnerable. I could die of old age. I could die unconscious in a hospital, after everything.

I think of that wall of oblivion and wish I had thrown myself at it with all the rage and joy and defiance in me and gone out that way.

But here I am, still around for some reason, leaking memory, wondering why. Someday soon the apocalypse in my head will fade, and I will forget the significance of red skies, and believe shadows are just shadows. **F**



DECEMBER-JANUARY 2014

BY PATRICIA EVANGELISTA

Midway during my deployment to Tacloban, my editor got off the plane to visit.

It was maybe 10 in the morning. I had been used to seeing him in a suit, but he was there in sneakers and a blue raincoat, carting a small cardboard box of instant noodles, two bags of Cheetos, and a package of disposable underwear. He was the prettiest sight I had seen in weeks.

He wouldn't drink the coffee in the Styrofoam cup I tried to hand him, said it made him feel guilty to take anything from anyone. He was back on the plane by noon. There were

no Instagram photos of him against the debris—hashtag Yolanda—or handshakes with the VIPs getting off helicopters. He stayed a little less than an hour and sat with me on the coast. He asked if I was okay, if I needed anything else—alcohol, cigarettes, paper?—and told me he was praying for me. I was not, at that moment, aware I needed prayers. I needed a bath, I needed time, and I needed, if possible, to pretend I wasn't a terrible human being for demanding Cheetos while the city starved behind me.

The magazine couldn't pay for very much, it was all hustle

and negotiation. The story I was writing, eventually published as "Land of the Mourning," was culled from dispatches that Rappler, my employer, was generous enough to allow for republication. Erwin paid for his trip himself—the ticket, the noodles, the extra pair of pants he snuck into the box. I am told the editor in chief of Esquire is required to appear dapper and man-of-the-world, but I am also well aware his income has very little to do with his job title.

I don't remember very much more, there was too much happening and too little being done and I was working with only an hour of sleep every night. What I know is this—that like every story published under the banner of Esquire, we near-killed each. When I got home a week after, there were three of us holed up in a smoky room with a laptop and a handful of notes. I was drunk, I suspect Erwin was drunk, and Sarge Lacuesta, who we had kept in the dark until the very last edit, was hunched over the table, switching tenses and flipping sentences and stopping every so often with "Fuck, that happened?"

Erwin, who had taken up smoking in the bare hour he stood in Tacloban, lit another stick, said yes, and for the love of God, Sarge, hurry.

I don't believe we made much of a difference, or did enough to try, but what Sarge said was what we really wanted to say. The dried-out body hanging from the tree, the wild dogs gnawing away at corpses, the broken flagpole at the city hall, the widowed man praying for death, and dozens of bodies sprawled in the water, surrounded by fat fish—fuck it, it happened. And because it did, it matters that we say it, and keep saying it, as often as we can, in the name of the men and women who looked up at the sky and disappeared into the sea. ■



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